

***Educational leadership in a neo-liberal era: How leadership coaching psychology impacts principal leadership and well-being. A mixed methods study.***

By

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A thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Lincoln for  
the degree of

Ph.D Professional (Education)

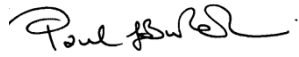
School of Education

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**Declaration**

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Ph.D Professional (Education) is entirely my own work and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.



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I have used quotations for this thesis from the Irish songwriter, poet and author Damien Dempsey whose words have inspired my thinking and my philosophical outlook on life. His music is both reflective and thought provoking. Grá Mór Damo.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to those in educational leadership who find the journey tough, but don't give up.

## **Abstract**

The role of the school principal has become more complex in recent years with a myriad of new responsibilities emerging, requiring a more business/performance leadership style (Sugrue, 2014; Oplatka, 2017). Education is somewhat “under siege”, often from external economically driven forces (Deasy and Mannix-McNamara, 2017, p. 59), which have placed a strain on the role of school leaders (Sebastian et al., 2017). Education leaders are now working more akin to business managers, than leaders of teaching and learning (Machin, 2014). Neoliberalism and the drive for efficiency and performance have continued to exert influence over education (Ball, 2003; Machin, 2014; Stynes, 2014; Deasy and Mannix-McNamara, 2017).

Across the business world, there have been numerous studies highlighting the benefits of leadership coaching as a means to improve both the performance and efficiency of leaders and their staff (Grant et al., 2009). In recent years, leadership coaching has made its way into the educational leadership landscape (Ogilvy and Ellam-Dyson, 2012; Gross, 2018).

The recognition by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in Ireland of leadership coaching as a means to enhance performance and support school principals, resulted in the setting up of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) in 2015, offering leadership coaching as a free support to school principals. Looking at other jurisdictions, such as Scotland, Singapore, New Zealand and Canada, the DES sought to evaluate the success of coaching in these areas. Thus, coaching has emerged as a means to up-skill Irish principal leaders in how to deal with the new challenges of leadership, with a “more in-depth talented leader” required for today’s role (CSL, 2015, p. 1).

As a new concept in Irish education, leadership coaching is relatively unknown. While coaching as a profession is still under question (Bonaiuto et al., 2008; Passmore & Fillery Travis, 2011), more research is required to assess its impact. With no research to draw on in the Irish context, or certainly very little, this research fills a gap in knowledge of the potential of leadership coaching in the Irish context.

The key research questions of this research were: How does leadership coaching psychology impact on the role of school principal and also to what extent does it impact on a principal's well-being?

A pragmatic worldview framed the research with a behavioural framework (Bandura, 1978) guiding the study. A mixed method approach was used, with a quantitative survey followed by semi structured interviews.

The findings provide many insights on the role of leadership coaching in education and many suggestions for its future development. In summary, the findings of this study suggest that leadership coaching does impact the role of educational leader/principal, facilitating a journey of reflective practice for leaders and those they manage. This in turn leads to a distribution of practice enabling distributed leadership, therein building leadership capacity. Furthermore, the research concludes that this process leads to enhanced well-being for both the principal/coach and the teacher/coachee. However, time, workload and creating a culture of coaching in schools is still a challenge, with leadership coaching still a new and unknown leadership concept for some.

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## **Glossary of terms and abbreviations**

- AIB Allied Irish Bank
- AP1 Assistant Principal level 1
- AP2 Assistant Principal Level 2
- ATECI Association of Teacher Education Centres of Ireland
- CIPD The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development
- CSL The Centre for School Leadership
- CPD Continued Professional Development
- DES Department of Education & Skills
- EMCC European Mentoring & Coaching Council
- HSE Health Service Executive
- ICF International Coaching Federation
- IELC The Institute of Executive and Leadership Coaching
- INTO The Irish National Teachers Organisation
- IPPN The Irish Primary Principals Network
- ISM In School Management
- PDST Professional Development Service for Teachers
- ROI Return on investment
- SPHE Social Personal Health Education
- QQI Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- WSE Whole School Evaluation

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.1 Introduction**

“I don’t know; I feel as though; we were cursed with a brain” .... “Don’t look out, look within, change yourself, to begin” (Dempsey, 2005).

Dempsey’s lyrics, (2005) denouncing the wonderment of human thinking, but yet exhorting its possibilities, propose the question: is a human’s ability to think more of a burden than a gift? Suggesting that people may be responsible for their own thinking, their own actions and possibly their own outcomes, presents a challenge to one’s perceptions of thoughts and action. Leadership coaching as a process may enable this reflective thought and action, but requires a journey inwards with a skilled practitioner and a willingness to engage in a journey of action.

### **1.2 The purpose of the study**

Neoliberalism and government policy in recent years have led to a change in the way educational leaders must carry out their functions. With increased accountability and performance targets now common in education, leaders need to adapt the way they manage and lead their staff. While in previous years, education tended to look at the whole person in a more holistic manner, this is now being replaced by a more functionalist perspective, aiming to serve both the economic needs of the country and global capital demands. This marketization of education has in turn had a negative impact on the health and well-being of both students and educators, for example Deasy and Mannix-McNamara, (2017, p.59) cogently argue that:

“The nature and context of education have changed dramatically in recent decades. The increased prioritisation of standardisation, performance indicators and metrics often means that holistic, affective and well-being education are seen as less important in the educational endeavour”



In 2015, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in Ireland started to provide leadership coaching as a free initiative to school principals, as both a support and in response to the new accountability model of leadership, through the newly established Centre for School Leadership (CSL). While initial take up of the free service has been very slow (originally only 400 places have been taken from a population of over 4000 school principals), the DES have endeavoured to increase the numbers, by allowing an initial 'personal chemistry' check meeting to ensure that both the coach and coachee agree they can work together, allowing an opt in or out clause for both parties thereafter.

Adapted from the business world, leadership coaching has emerged as a way to "up-skill" principal teachers, to enable them deal with the new leadership skills required of the role (CSL, 2015, p.1). The purpose of this Ph.D research was to assess the impact of leadership coaching psychology on educational leadership, by furthering understanding of how leadership behaviour was impacted by educational leaders who have completed a Diploma in leadership coaching, consisting of 6 core modules, 100 hours of peer to peer practice, coaching supervision, and completed assignments. The programme also needed to have academic validity, requiring a Quality and Qualifications Ireland, (QQI) recognised professional coaching component at level 6. The course contained an in-depth assessment, with feedback on practice and aimed to increase skills. It also had the accreditation of the European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC) and the International Coaching Federation (ICF) giving the programme extra validity.

### **1.3 Context/positionality**

In 2015 the author was appointed Director of Mayo Education Centre in Ireland on a five year contract, with responsibility for the continuous professional development (CPD) needs of teachers from over 200 primary and post-primary schools in the West of Ireland. With a passion for leadership, and having successfully completed a Diploma in leadership coaching and associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6, the author was very impressed by both the course content and theory and practice elements,

but more so the potential of coaching practice that could enable the self-development of oneself and those employees one was responsible for leading. Having made a decision to offer a leadership coaching training course through the Education Centre, and through a collaboration with Kingstown College, Dublin, two separate courses were run over 7 month periods and 2 academic years 2016/17 and 2017/18. With over 38 graduates completing the programme and very positive feedback gathered from the course, the author sought to further explore the impact of leadership coaching for educational leaders. This coincided with the launch by the DES of the CSL, with the offering of a leadership coaching support service to school principals, a first in Ireland. Although coaching was being offered to educational leaders in other countries, this was Ireland's first commitment to leadership coaching for school principals. A gap in research was evident to assess the impact of coaching in Ireland, thus giving rise to the motivation for this study.

#### **1.4 Neoliberalism in education**

Since the 1990's there has been a major reform in educational leadership with the neoliberal agenda of accountability, performativity and reporting now a core responsibility for educational leaders (Ball, 2003; Machin, 2014; Stynes 2014). The role of the school principal has become heavily administrative (Sebastian et al., 2017) with huge workloads now under the auspices of business activities, a new development for principals, who in the past were seen as leaders of learning (Machin, 2014). These increased responsibilities are putting a strain on the role of the principal with an increased workload, and reduced resources impacting health and well-being (Burns et al., 2016).

For Whitaker (2003), the role of principal has changed globally with increased accountability, administration and competition resulting in increased job scrutiny and job demands. The increased shift from a manufacturing to an information society, is now the norm, and this new means of working requires modern leadership approaches with educational leadership being no different (Kegan and Lahey, 2009).

### **1.5 Leadership coaching as a support to educational leadership**

These new demands have required supports to help principals deal with the increased complexity of leadership with the role now requiring an “ever increasing breadth and depth of leadership talent,” (CSL, 2015, p.1). One of the prime offerings of the new CSL centre was to provide leadership coaching to school principals as a “mainstream means of enhancing performance” (Grant et al., 2009, p. 396). Coaching has traditionally been a business endeavour, with corporations seeking to enhance profits, and while its merits are still debatable, (Passmore and Fillery Travis, 2011), critical leadership issues also present themselves in education (Hung, 2017).

### **1.6 Research aims and objectives**

As a new concept in Ireland, leadership coaching psychology training is also a new approach to acquiring leadership skills. Participants for the study were chosen from those leaders who undertook such leadership coaching training, with a requirement that they would have the required minimum level approved Diploma in Coaching and associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6, thus graduate coaches and a mixed methods approach to data analysis was used, the rationale for which are considered in greater depth below. Feldman and Lankau (2005 p. 843), suggest that research on whether coaching can “be enhanced by more formal training programs”, should be carried out, and is one of the main motivations for this study. The aim of this current research was to investigate why some principals will, of their own motivation, agree to a training programme in coaching and what if any impact it may have.

The concepts of what makes effective training was examined using Dewitt’s (2018, p. 43) assessment of learning, viz.: 1) There must be a protocol in place (training); 2) There must be evidence that this approach works (academic rigour of the programme with evidence based research); and 3) There must be an improvement in practice (the core rationale of this research). These concepts were seen to be present in the chosen programme for research.

### **1.7 Key research questions**

The key research questions of this research were:

- How does leadership coaching psychology impact on the role of school principal?
- How does leadership coaching psychology impact on a principal's well-being?

Data gathered during the study suggested that by employing the process of leadership coaching, both the principal (coach) and teacher (coachee) have a positive experience from the process, resulting in perceived benefits for the impact of their leadership in their schools. This concurred with literature gathered during the literature review, with many authors concluding that leadership coaching has the capacity to impact leadership positively (Grant et al., 2009; Beere and Broughton, 2013; Page and De Haan, 2014; Gavin, 2018; Trujillo, 2018). In addition, data gathered during the study also suggested an improvement in general well-being of the leader and that coaching as a process led to a distribution of practice and a shared approach to leadership, which in turn had the impact of enhancing the well-being of both the coach and the coachee. This is echoed in the literature, with various authors acknowledging the relationship that can exist between leadership coaching and well-being for both the leader and the person being coached, with positive aspects being noted for the workplace (Wales, 2002; Grant, 2006; Gyllensten and Palmer, 2006; Sardar and Galdames, 2018).

Many authors have suggested that leadership coaching is often considered as best practice for leadership development (Ely et al., 2010), with the aim of changing the behaviours of leaders in organisations. The term “transformational leadership” is often used to explain a type of leadership where leaders aim to develop their subordinates, getting to know their needs and providing individualised support. In essence they provide a coaching and mentoring approach to leadership to help staff achieve their potential (Anthony, 2017). Sonesh et al., (2015) found that coaching improved the leader's leadership skills, job performance and skills development, as well as their workplace attitude. Consequently, as a result of coaching, leaders demonstrated an increase in self-efficacy, motivation to transfer coach skills to the workplace and organisational commitment, as well as reduced stress. This increase in skill set has also allowed leaders

to have a more “individualised consideration” towards those they manage, contributing to a more transformational type of leadership (Anthony, 2017, p. 932). This in turn has allowed leaders to consider their subordinates training needs, strengths and accomplishments which has resulted in “delegating behaviours” and the relinquishing of responsibilities and delegation of authority to their staff (Anthony, 2017 p. 932). Not only did the research by Anthony, (2017) suggest that staff acquired new skills through this process, but overall leadership coaching had a positive impact on the organisation, since staff had more authority, more voice and were not being micromanaged. The study concluded that those leaders who trained in leadership coaching were more likely to delegate to others, provide individualised support to those they manage but in addition this had the impact of “providing a positive and productive work environment” for the staff the leader managed (Anthony, 2017, p. 936). This enhanced workplace leads to an improvement in well-being for such staff, suggesting a link between leadership coaching and well-being.

Therefore, it is not just the leader who benefits from coaching staff, but the employee being coached also benefits from the coaching process. Much research (West Burham, 2009; Aguilar, 2013), has been devoted to examining the impact of coaching on the leaders themselves being coached and how they aim to adopt a coaching style to leadership in the workplace. However, it is also important to assess the impact on the coachee and how receiving coaching impacts their lives. Another consideration is instances where coaching is not effective or is unsuccessful or, indeed, the hindrances to such impact. These are issues posed by Carter et al., (2017), who acknowledge that coaching in business has received broadly favourable views of coaching outcomes and effectiveness. They also state that there are many empirical studies that suggest that training interventions that are based around providing support and help to employees (such as coaching) do actually enhance training effectiveness. This assumption may also be true for coaching. While coaching literature often focuses on successful coaching, unsuccessful coaching is often attributed to relationship issues, such as with a line manager, team or team member (Carter et al., 2017). Gathering data from 296 survey

respondents, other issues recorded in the research by Carter et al., (2017, p. 77) cited personal difficulties for subordinates being coached, such as being “defensive”, or “my colleagues resented covering my time off for coaching”. Other research by Peterson (2011) cited motivation as a key driver in the success of coaching, and argued that the coachee needs to be motivated towards a goal or end in order to fully embrace the process. Furthermore, he cited difficulties for the coaching process, in situations where coachees had no ambition for power, status or goal orientation.

Other barriers to coaching, identified in the academic research literature on the topic, included unclear goals from the coach (coach competence) and commitment/emotional issues such as “emotions got in the way” and “I lacked commitment,” with some factors being mentioned specifically, such as time, cost to travel and coach competence which often figure as a significant factor (Carter et al., 2017, p. 82). While there are these and other obstacles to an effective coaching relationship, one of the key elements of a successful coaching relationship is the upfront agreement of realistic expectations; this is also essential for building trust (Buthmann & Kleinert, 2007). Because many coaches do not see the importance of appropriately setting expectations, building the coaching agreement is frequently omitted. However, coaching without an agreement is reactive and coaching effectiveness is consequently negatively impacted (Seeley Harris, 2008). Therefore, the key elements to include in the coaching agreement are:

- Purpose and goals of the coaching sessions.
- Duration of sessions – one-hour weekly meetings recommended.
- Content of the sessions – balance between project updates, tool clarification and issue resolution.
- Responsibilities – what happens between sessions, who is involved in the sessions, meeting etiquette and how to provide feedback?
- Limits of confidentiality – how and when to escalate issues.

- Termination – when is it appropriate to terminate the coaching relationship, and how to proceed?

(Bourg et al., 2010 p. 1009).

This concurs with other literature which suggests that the relationship between the coach and coachee is of paramount importance (Morris 1998; Peterson, 2011; Beere and Broughton, 2013; Gavin, 2018). This observation was also noted in this research.

Despite these noted issues (which arguably could be addressed) 89% of the 296 respondents from the research carried out by Carter et al., (2017, p. 81), reported that their coaching received was effective with 11% stating it was of limited value. Statistical data from the research suggested that other factors such as personal commitment (also noted as readiness and engagement) and family support were also factors that supported their coaching success.

Acknowledging these possible shortcoming in coaching, literature garnered in this study suggested that in most instances coaching had a positive influence on both the coach and the coachee, with some evidence that leadership coaching had an impact on well-being. Even in difficult coaching scenarios, Peterson (2011) suggested that coaches can still help participants gain new insights, skills or knowledge, or even practice change that can refine a skill or behaviour. Coaching is still a relatively new discipline in leadership education, and so it is filled with many contradictions and some confusion. Yet despite the many anomalies in the coaching arena, Peterson (2011, p.556) argued that:

“coaching appears to be one of the most potent, versatile, and efficient leadership development tools available. In fact, its adaptability and versatility probably explain in some part why it is so difficult to quantify and define. Nonetheless, as long as coaches continue to seek better ways to help leaders accelerate their learning and improve performance, coaching itself is likely to continue to flourish long into the future”

Conclusions from this study suggest that leadership coaching leads to a process of reflective practice, which has been identified both through the language used and emotions recorded (Saldaña, 2013). The skill sets learned (active listening, powerful questioning) in turn lead to a distribution of practice (acknowledgement that others have the answer within) that includes distributed leadership, in turn resulting in staff being more empowered, and impacting positively on not only the well-being of the leader (who has received leadership coaching training), but also the staff member.

## **1.8 Outline of the study:**

### **1.8.1 Literature overview**

Following this introductory chapter, a review of the current literature will be presented in chapter two. The literature is linked to a discussion of findings which is presented in chapter four, followed by a discussion of the findings of the research, presented in chapter five. Literature was organised using Mendeley software, as it facilitated cross platform and device compatibility allowing the collating and organising of journals, articles and resources efficiently. The literature set the backdrop to the challenges of leadership in education in an era of enhanced performativity, accountability and neo-liberal agendas of government. It discussed the importance that effective leadership plays in Irish education and provided a contextual background as to why leadership coaching is now making its way into education, with its roots in business performance. By looking at the roots and history of coaching, suitable definitions of leadership coaching, skills of coaches and challenges to a coaching culture, it gave a suitable background to leadership coaching and its aims. The literature was developed to assess the impact of leadership coaching in organisations in general, before looking at examples from other parts of the world, where leadership coaching has been trialled in education. The chapter concludes by examining the link between coaching and leader well-being.

### **1.8.2 Research design**

The research design and research methods are presented in Chapter 3. This study was located within a pragmatic paradigm, using a mixed methods approach to the study



consisting of a survey with identified participants of the qualifying leadership coaching programme (n=54), followed by 12 in-depth interviews. For Flugum (2018), pragmatism arises out of actions and situations that require solutions to problems, a premise that leadership coaching also aims to address. The approach also allows for differing world views, different collection methods and analysis such as a mixed methods study.

This study was conducted using a sequential design. For this approach, the researcher conducted a quantitative survey before undertaking the qualitative elements of the research. Thereafter the researcher weighed both methods against the other and analysed the two components of the research independently, and interpreted the results together (Creswell & Pablo-Clark, 2011). This approach aimed to triangulate the methods, by directly comparing the statistical results gathered through the survey, with the qualitative findings obtained through the semi structured interviews. This further probing supported a more in-depth analysis allowing the researcher to understand the motivations for behaviours which may not have been answered through the survey only, and allowed a deeper discussion for analysis.

Prior to the respondents attending for interview, the participants were sent a consent form informing them about the aims of the research, the purpose of the study and outlined ethical issues and matters of confidentiality and security of data storage (See Appendix 1). Following on from the interviews, the recordings were transcribed and the text imported into Nvivo. Initially free coding was applied in a logical manner to the data, based on themes that were emerging, frequency of language used, and cognisance of the framework that was guiding the study. The overarching framework (Bandura, 1978), considered the influences of personal, environmental and, finally, behavioural factors which worked in a triad of reciprocity. For personal factors, these were considered to be aspects such as biology, cognition and background; for environment such influences as school culture or home life were considered, which in turn have an impact on the third part of the triad, that of behaviour. Calling his model reciprocal determinism, Bandura (1978) suggested these three influences impact on each other and that changing one can

impact the others. Coaching, as a process, aims to impact these three factors of influence positively and independently, thereby aiming to influence behaviour.

### **1.9 Ontological perspective**

Leadership coaching aims to change behaviour, but may impact behaviour differently, according to how leaders view their existence and their world. Therefore, it was envisaged that principals would engage with the research as unique individuals in their own circumstances, representing the reality of life in schools in 2019/20, and within the reality of their own existence. Leadership is a “contextual construct shaped by incessant interchangeable factors including time, human interaction, culture politics, society and so on” (McGovern, 2015, p. 8). The ontology that guided this research was derived from a constructive worldview, whereby individuals construct meaning and understanding based on the world in which they live and also where they work (Creswell, 2014). This constructivist view means that objective reality is not viewed or perceived directly, but based on a person’s view of the world and the sensory input from various sources that they experience. Bandura’s (1978) behavioural framework of reciprocal determinism was used to provide a structure for this research, as leadership coaching is also a behavioural change endeavour.

### **1.10 Methodology**

#### **1.10.1 Questionnaire**

As previously outlined, the questionnaire for this study was designed considering the work of Dewitt, (2018, p. 43) and addressing what ensures effective training. The requirements of protocol (training), evidence (academic rigour) and a change in practice were met within the leadership coaching programme being offered, and thus fitted the requirement of leadership coaching expertise and were thus appropriate for further research. A decision was taken by the researcher not to evaluate leadership coaching with principals nationwide, who may have experienced or attended minor courses/training events in leadership coaching, or attended CSL coaching, as the researcher sought to assess leadership coaching as a process at a much more committed level by participants,

who would both have enhanced understanding and practical experience of coaching. This is developed further in Chapter 3.

#### **1.10.2 Semi structured interviews**

From the total survey size (n=54), invitations to complete the survey were sent to all known suitable participants. In addition, the survey was distributed to all schools in Ireland through the Irish Primary Principals Network, (IPPN) and Education Centre Network (ATECI), (see Appendix 2). 48 respondents completed the survey with 12 volunteers who agreed to be interviewed. Questions for the interview were further developed, based on questions from the survey. With the aim of further triangulation, the interviews sought to draw out deeper insight from data gathered in the surveys and to remove any “degrees of uncertainty” (Scherbaum and Shockley, 2015, p.4).

Both the survey and interviews drew on the identified themes of the literature and considered under the work of Dewitt (2018) for evaluating training. The interviews allowed for the expansion of knowledge and to “probe deeper” into participants’ experiences, particularly of the practical aspects of leadership coaching (Lonergan et al., 2012, p. 111)

Direct quotes relevant to the themes were used to reflect participants’ views and to support themes that appeared to be coming from the text. Quotes were used that were convincing, that were repeated throughout the data, examining emphasis, language used and the depth of argument by the participants. A secondary round of coding, based on the work of Saldaña (2013), examined language and emotion as a means to put a final framework and summary of the main findings, whilst considering the quantitative data and statistical analysis. While the statistical analysis identified certain significant correlations relating to the data collected, this did not impact the general themes that emerged from the data, pointing to important relationships between variables on gender and age, but still supporting the final thematic conclusions. Further information is provided in the findings and discussion chapters.

### **1.11 Presentation of findings, discussion and conclusion**

The data gathered through an online survey and further investigation through 12 semi structured interviews is presented in chapter four representing the main findings. In chapter five the themes of the research are discussed with links to the original research questions. Chapter six concludes the thesis with limitations, recommendations, and potential future research being discussed, before dissemination and the final chapter conclusions are presented.

### **1.12 Definition of terms/clarifications**

There are many definitions to explain the word coaching, such as personal, executive, leadership, life and others. For Peterson (2011), there is a huge challenge in any attempts to define such a broad diverse practice, particularly when it encapsulates disciplines such as therapy, counselling, business, consulting and psychology, but suggests that at the core is a relationship, where a process of facilitation exists to be a more effective leader. In addition, he proposed that this facilitation involves learning and development with the purpose of “improving one’s performance and enhancing effective action” (Peterson, 2011, p. 528). He suggested that effective coaching at executive level involves the following elements:

- one on one work;
- relationship based assuming a level of trust, understanding and rapport;
- methodology based drawing on techniques and tools;
- provided by a professional;
- scheduled in multiple sessions over time so as to have impact and accountability;
- goal orientated;
- customised to the person (often this is not given enough attention and can lead to coaching failure due to lack of personalisation); and
- intended to enhance the person’s ability to learn and develop independently (Peterson, 2011, p. 528-529).

While there are many definitions, the process of coaching follows an ordered routine very similar to that of the elements listed above. Thus, for the purposes of this research study, the term leadership coaching was used when referring to aspects of coaching that possibly could fall under many different names. As this study examined the concept of educational leadership, and most of the chosen literature was leadership driven, it is appropriate to work within the structures of leadership coaching. All coaching practice has the common theme of working with a coach towards a goal of self-improvement and development. The definition of coaching for this study was informed by what Gavin (2018) describes as “coaching from a leadership viewpoint”, which “is more likely to translate into measurable forms of business value” (Gavin, 2018, p.139). For Gavin (2018), coaching from a leadership perspective is about “growing and developing” and the benefits of leadership coaching includes helping leaders to develop such skills as emotional intelligence, establishing professional goals and having skills to develop new practice around change (Gavin, 2018, pp.140-142). The role of the school principal requires all these skills. In addition, for this process of change to be effective, and for coaching to be engaging, the relationship between the coach and coachee is also of paramount importance.

Distributed leadership, as referenced in this thesis, is also known as a type of leadership whereby leaders delegate, support and empower staff to take on school tasks. Leadership coaching provides a collaborative means to achieve this, with the aim of coachees meeting their potential through a coaching model. It builds on the model of distributed leadership by emphasising coaching skills as a means to devolve responsibility in a more empowering way, thus avoiding resistance and conflict that may come from devolved distributed leadership of the past.

While this research was aimed at school principals, it also included deputy principals and assistant principals, which are two principal grades within the Irish educational system at level 1 or 2 and are known as AP1 and AP2. In Ireland schools are governed by a Board of Management of eight members. Two are nominated by the Paton (usually the diocesan Bishop), two parents elected by the parent body, two teachers (one the school principal

and the other elected by the teachers) and two nominated members from the community. The day to day management of the school is the responsibility of the school principal who liaises with the board of management on governance issues. The school principal is assisted by the ISM (In School Management) team consisting of the Deputy Principal, and depending on the school size two grades of Assistant Principal level. Assistant Principal 1 ranks next to Deputy Principal and normally has a significant post of responsibility with Assistant Principal two having a lesser amount of duties. As part of the management team their views on leadership coaching were an essential part of this research.

Whilst most respondents/participants answered all questions, there were a small number of occasions where respondents were unable (or unwilling) to answer questions, due to such factors as they may not be managing staff at the time (some were on secondment temporarily) or may not have had suitable experience to answer certain questions truthfully or other issues may have restricted answers. Ap1 and ap2 roles often have restricted duties which may have precluded them from completing some of the survey questions. In these limited instances, data has been calculated allowing for received responses so as not to distort the data collection and analysis.

During this research the author referenced the leadership coaching offerings of the CSL as a support to school principals, (which involved no training for principals) which is funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and the leadership coaching training programme undertaken by participants of this research. This research did not aim to assess the impact of the CSL coaching model available to school principals but to *analyse* the impact of leadership coaching training for school leaders/principals who had received coaching training at an advanced level.

### **1.13 Chapter summary**

This introductory chapter has laid out the course of the study, noting its purpose, context, background and key research questions. This chapter also provided a definition of terms and clarifications, to aid the reader of this study. A brief layout of the further chapters on

literature, design, findings, discussion, conclusions and recommendations are also presented. Chapter two will examine current literature on leadership and provide an overview of coaching as a process.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **A review of the literature**

“....Inside our minds we hold, we hold the key”

(Dempsey, 2005)

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature reviewed in this study was gathered from a variety of topics relevant to the study. A comprehensive account of the relevant literature is outlined in the introduction, to provide the necessary background regarding the impact of leadership coaching psychology for educational leadership. In the context of this research, relevant literature included works on the neoliberal era of accountability and performativity, the impact of this on leadership (particularly educational leadership), and the emergence of leadership coaching psychology as a support to addressing leadership challenges. The review subsequently considered definitions, practice, and finally the impact of coaching psychology on educational leadership and on leadership well-being, as a means to aid the role in a neoliberal era. Finally, particular attention was paid to the challenges of leadership, and those challenges facing leadership coaching psychology.

#### **2.2 Neoliberalism: The leadership role of the school principal**

Since the 1990's, there has been a major reform in educational leadership, with the neoliberal agenda of performativity, business management, and accountability having a major impact on the role of educational leaders (Ball, 2003; Machin, 2014; Stynes, 2014). The sin of inefficiency (Sugrue, 2014) has resulted in an increased workload for school principals (Oplatka, 2017), which is having an impact on the functioning of schools (Horng et al., 2009). As such, principals' work is “characterised by long hours, numerous tasks, a frenzied pace, brevity and fragmentation,” (Sebastian et al., 2017, p. 6), with the role becoming “heavily administrative” (Sebastian et al., 2017, p. 6), with performativity and accountability functions now a requirement of that administration. Thus, the search for efficiency is more about the contribution of



education to the social system, than it is about educational ideas, meaning that principals now find themselves having to be subjected to various measures in response to societal targets (Gond et al., 2016).

According to Tucker and Coddling (2002), advancements in recent years in business organisations, driven by globalization, ICT innovations, deregulation of industry, competitiveness and the drive for enhanced product development and profit, have affected leadership roles in all sectors. In recent years, these “business” leadership models are being imposed on schools, as appropriate developments and are now occupying a significant amount of school principals’ professional time and are thus affecting their ability to lead learning and teaching, due to “urgent but not important” business agendas (Smith et al., 2016, p. xii). Such pressures are having a huge bearing on the ability of school leaders to manage their workload, with most of the time being spent on “business manager” or administrative activities and not “teaching and learning” (Machin, 2014, p. 19). Thus the nature of the role of school principal has led to a huge increase in demands, which mean that principals cannot “devote sustained attention to anything” (Connolly, 2007, p.50). A significant stressor has been the increased emphasis by governments on accountability for uniform curriculum delivery, along with the devolution of administrative tasks from central to local control (Riley, 2011).

School leaders constantly feel the pull between “efficiency and effectiveness” (Murphy, 2013, p. 48). These concepts of “performativity” and “accountability” from commercial forces are being imported into educational leadership as appropriate school leadership forces. As such, concepts such as competition and structural efficiency, targets and accountability, and the desire for progression by parents, society, government, and economic accountability are very evident in today's school cultures (Machin, 2014).

Whitaker (2003), pointed out that the role of the principal has changed globally, not only with increased accountability, but with tension between administration and leadership, and the demands of competition with school promotion, resulting in an increase in the requirements of the job and associated scrutiny. As a result, this performativity aspect of the role contributes much less to the school’s well-being, than other activities in which

principals should be involved in (Hornig et al., 2009). This view was also supported by Moynihan et al., (2016) when they researched the health promotion schools programmes in Ireland. In their study, Moynihan et al., (2016, p. 26) stated that “the broader challenges facing the teaching profession were thought to be taking its toll on teachers’ own health and well-being and adversely impacting upon their capacity to provide holistic education.” A worrying finding from their study at post-primary level showed that often Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was not compulsory, and that the impact of the subject was often down to the commitment and drive of the teachers who may have had a personal interest in the subject. A key factor impacting successful health promotion in schools was input from leadership, finding that in 85% of schools in the study, the principal’s support was an important factor in the implementation of SPHE success, a primary subject contributing towards well-being in schools. They also found leadership support to be an important factor of success, in subjects such as SPHE in Norwegian, Canadian and German experiences, stating: “for successful and sustained implementation, commitment from management and a strong co-ordination team is essential” (Moynihan et al., 2016, p. 28).

While these initiatives are noteworthy, all of the business agendas, in the form of accounting for one's work and performing to set agendas, are not only impacting on principals’ ability to do their job but distracting them from such well-being initiatives, with this type of accountability/performativity also affecting the general health and well-being of school principals themselves. Burns et al., (2016), in their study of job strain on mental health and well-being, concluded that a high strain job confers considerable risk for poorer mental health and well-being outcomes. While their study had some limitations, focusing more on current well-being than future well-being, they were still able to demonstrate a “strong impact” on mental health and well-being, due to principals having a high stress work role (Burns et al., 2016, pp.725-733).

In addition to the neoliberal agenda of government, there have also been extraordinary developments in global economies (Kegan and Lahey, 2009), with a shift from a manufacturing society to an information society being the most obvious, a transition from

physical labour to mind work or “mental complexity” as the “dominant employee activity” now becoming the norm (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p. 25). According to Kegan and Lahey, (2009), this has required a “re-authoring” of how organisations should be run and by not applying a technical means to solve an adaptive challenge of mind (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, pp. 26-29). Organisations are constantly looking to re-engineer their practices by examining leadership skills, with educational leadership being no different.

In recent years the emergence of distributed leadership has been advocated as a means to distribute the responsibilities and workload, and assist organisations and schools adapt to these new challenges. This model of leadership is of more interest to educational leaders in recent years to adapt to the changing society, however the impact of distributed leadership often has mixed success, with the justification of this model of leadership often more about assigning activities and depending on the teacher’s capacity to change (Amels et al., 2020). While collaboration is a suggested approach of distributed leadership, it often depends on the perception of the leader and previous leadership practice, which can often lead to resistance by staff who often perceive the change as “externally mandated” or internally initiated” (Amels et al., 2020, p. 3). Based on their study of 787 Dutch primary schools, the distributed model of leadership was successful where teachers were respected, allowed take initiative and where the principals had an appropriate perception of the aim of distributed leadership and the skills to enable it. However, there was little evidence that distributed leadership supported teachers’ capacity to change with the principal’s leadership in itself not enough. Teachers were often “more focussed on their classrooms” than interested in leadership responsibilities (Amels et al., 2020 p. 10). Suggesting further research on how a model of distributed leadership could be effective in teachers realising educational change as necessary provided a rationale for further educational leadership research. Thus research in leadership coaching can assist the model of distributed leadership in schools. While acknowledging this research was carried out in a different cultural setting, nevertheless it does provide insight into distributed leadership and teacher perceptions.

The formation of the CSL in 2015 was a government response to the recognition of the central role of school leadership in Ireland, and particularly in supporting schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students (CSL, 2015, p.1). The increasing complexity of educational leadership requires an “ever increasing breadth and depth of leadership talent”, with CSL also aiming to support both aspiring leaders and those already in the role (CSL, 2015, p.1). Having conducted an audit of leadership support in other jurisdictions (Scotland, Singapore, New Zealand, and Canada), the CSL recognised the value of offering key support areas of mentoring and coaching to school principals, albeit a leadership process normally associated with the corporate and business world.

### **2.2.1 Leadership Coaching and Distributed Leadership; the macro view**

Looking further at the model of distributed leadership, according to Hairon and Goh (2015, p. 693), ‘distributed leadership is one of the most prominent contemporary leadership theories in education.’ While distributed leadership is often associated with the distribution of tasks, it involves an interaction with others in particular contexts and involves a social dimension around ‘influencing others to make change’ (Robinson, 2008, p. 243). Thus it is more than assigning duties to AP1 and AP2s in schools around tasks. It involves an open form of communication and empowerment with the idea that the job of leadership has become too broad to be carried out by a Principal alone. Thus distributed leadership has the ability to empower many views in the school, rather than the few. Distributed leadership is a leadership practice rather than focusing on leaders or their roles, functions, routines and structures (Spillane, 2006). Key to distributed leadership is the interactions that exist amongst its leaders and followers.

However, despite distributed leadership being used in many schools throughout the country, it is not the panacea for all leadership issues. Acknowledging that the demands of the role of the school principal require some element of distribution due to the neoliberal demands and legislative changes that have impacted on workload in the last number of years, what is required is not a debate on distributed leadership per se but a means to distribute workload in a manner that both empowers motivates and inspires others.

Building on the DES document 'Looking at our Schools' (2016) distributed leadership is promoted as a preferred means of leadership in education in Ireland today. However, leadership as a process should not be about exercising influence and should be distinguished from other sources of power relationships such as force, coercion and manipulation but instead should create the conditions that others can think and act differently (Robinson, 2008). This type of empowerment (Fay, 1987) is evident in a coaching style of leadership with coaching considered a significant strategy for organisational leadership and change. "Empirical research on the role of tools in distributed leadership practice is in its infancy" (Robinson, p. 250), and while there are many merits to be found in distributing leadership throughout an organisation or school, it can often be met with resistance. Leadership coaching on the other hand provides a framework for distributed leadership that has the potential to motivate staff members intrinsically thus breaking down the barriers of an imposed distribution of tasks that are often associated with distributed leadership models. Schools are challenging and busy work environments and "require an ever-increasing breadth and depth of leadership talent within the school community" (CSL, 2017, p. 1) with coaching skills aiming to support this aim.

### **2.2.2 Situational Leadership and Coaching**

With leadership coaching now available as a support to principals in Ireland it is important to evaluate where it is located in the lexicon of leadership practice. According to Blanchard, Zigarmi and Nelson (1993), the same leadership style cannot apply to all situations and that a change of leadership style may be required depending on the context. They suggested that the approach taken varies depending on the employees' competencies, the maturity of the employees, the complexity of the task and the leadership style. This is represented in figure 1 below:

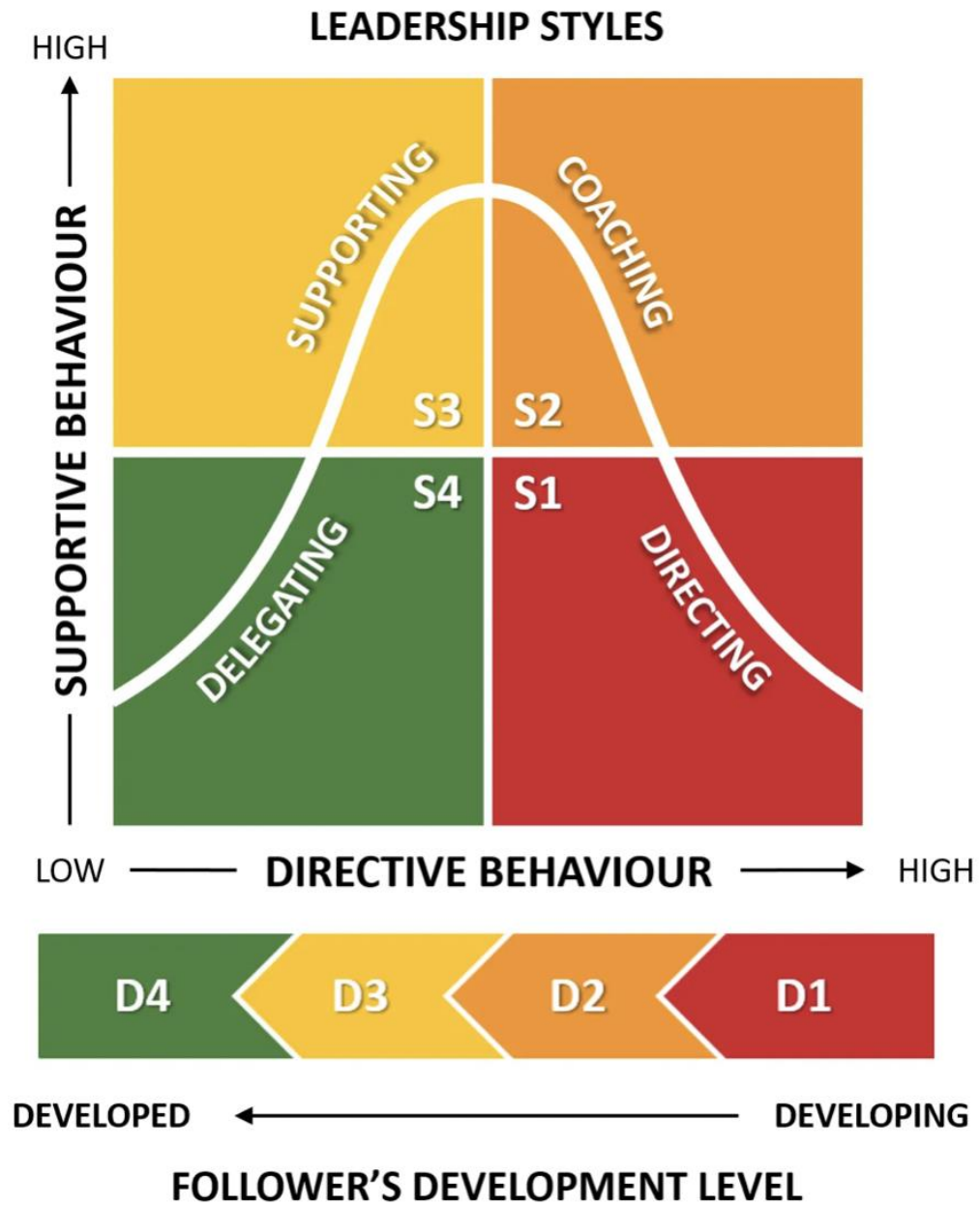


Figure 1 Blanchard, Zigarmi and Nelson (1993 p. 26)

Referring to their model as situational leadership S1 denotes leaders who minutely supervise their employees work, instructing them when, how and what tasks they need to perform. In S2 situations leaders provide controlled direction, is more open and allows a two-way form of communication with the employee working towards the organisational goals. In S3 leaders seek the opinion and participation of the employee to establish how work should be performed with the leader developing a relationship with the employee. S4 refers to delegating where the leader plays a role in decisions but delegates the responsibilities of carrying out the task to its employees. The leader monitors and reviews the process.

The model also provides consideration of competence and commitment when using these styles where D1 is unable but willing, D2 unable and unwilling, D3 able and unwilling with D4 able and willing with high commitment and high competence.

Applying this model to a school setting it could be argued that the ideal style employed by principals would be in quadrant S3 and S2 with the favoured model of distributed leadership providing high levels of support. Arguable where leadership coaching is used by principals, by providing a high directive style (in areas such as school vision, ethos, school self-evaluation targets, curriculum targets) and providing high supportive behaviour (coaching sessions, addressing needs, training) the potential for enhanced teaching and learning outcomes should be enhanced. What is required is an appropriate level of support and direction allowing for the competence level of the teacher.

However not all teachers will be highly competent and highly committed with some refusing to engage in a coaching style of leadership with a principal. While there could be many reasons for this with Blanchard, Zigarmi and Nelson (1993) referring to such issues as stubbornness, insufficient training or lack of recognition, they suggest that best practice may be where people are developed when they receive the 'leadership style they need from their managers' (p. 27).

Bearing in mind that most teachers are autonomous workers who work alone with their class each day with minimum supervision and maximum trust, effective leadership

coaching can help develop the capacity of teachers as leaders in their own right by providing appropriate styles from the situational model but in a coaching style of delivery.

In assessing the use of this model in education requires some further thought however. Firstly, this model is over 27 years old and was developed long before leadership coaching had developed sufficiently as a leadership style in mainstream leadership. While the word coaching is mentioned in the model, it may not fully portray the level of development over the last 30 years of what coaching is in 2020, with high levels of training and development now available for 'coaching' and with numerous academic qualifications available in coaching and institutions such as the EMCC and ICF monitoring quality, it is possible that coaching is still a highly supportive function but will less directive application. The premise of leadership coaching is to draw out from within solutions to the employees' problems, rather than provide a directive approach as suggested in the model. Thus coaching as a leadership style may have developed its application. Having considered coaching and its position within leadership, it is useful to examine its position in the Irish context.

### 2.2.3 Looking at our Schools 2016 and Irish context

In 2016 the Department of Education and skills launched a new document titled 'Looking at our schools 2016'. This document provided a quality framework around the areas of teaching and learning and leadership and management. Through the provision of a set of standards describing effective practice and highly effective practice, the framework aimed to help schools to identify their strengths and areas for development and to enable them to take ownership of their own development and improvement. The aim of the framework was to also have a holistic view of learning.

This document also aimed to develop a broad range of skills, competencies and values that enable personal well-being. While the quality framework refers generally to school leaders, patrons and boards of management, the leadership and management dimension was intended to assist all teachers in getting a perspective on their own leadership roles in the school and how they could develop and expand their leadership skills over time.



Within its guidance is an emphasis on reflecting and improving aspects of teaching at school which allows for a school context to be considered. It also emphasises the accountability function around improvement. Furthermore, it suggests that school leaders are encouraged to promote a culture of improvement and collaboration and increased communication throughout the school community and to develop a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability. It also suggested that leaders would empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles within their schools.

With a large focus on the role of leader there is an emphasis on the leader's role to lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation with the school principal competently exercising the role in leading and managing action planning for improvement. Imperative to the success of this endeavour is that those in leadership and management roles are alert and responsive to the changing needs of the school. The documents further suggested that principals would attend successfully to their own well-being as well as that of others and that they would prioritise and delegate responsibilities appropriately and strategically based on the priority needs of the school. Within this it is suggested that leaders empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles and to effectively use models of distributed leadership to support this aim, valuing their role within a professional learning organisation and as a matter of course sharing their expertise with other teachers in the school. Thus, Principals are to encourage teamwork in all aspects of school life, creating and motivating staff teams. The framework also suggested that principals would manage an affective mentoring program both to support new teachers and to develop the leadership capacity of mentors.

Coaching as a leadership style can help support leaders in their aim to implement the guidance provided by this document. This guidance draws on the reflective nature of coaching as a means to self-reflect with the skills of leadership coaching such as active listening, effective questioning, summarising and using coaching models, which are reflective in nature, assisting principals to improvement in their practice and that of their schools. It's emphasis on developing leadership capacity through empowerment and the

self-evaluation of teachers and their role as leaders themselves is a useful context that would be very suitable to a coaching style of leadership. It is therefore quite apt that leadership coaching would be a suitable strategic leadership style that would enable the facilitation of compliance with the guidance in the Looking at Our School 2016 guidelines. This type of reflection is supported as a useful means to improve practice such as cited by Lynch et al., (2012) and (Hargreaves and Page, 2013).

#### **2.2.4 Neo-liberalism and coaching**

While a coaching style of leadership may support the development of recommendations in the Looking at our Schools (2016) guidance, the setting up of the CSL by the DES however needs further interrogation. The prevalence of humanistic psychology and the rise of neoliberalism combined with the commodification of therapeutic and spiritual practices constitute a background against which coaching has gained its popularity in western corporate environments. It therefore could be argued that coaching takes place within a discourse of competition, ROI, goal attainment and self-actualisation, and thus it could be argued that coaching can become a tool for organisational conformity (Shoukry, 2018). Influenced by political pressures in recent decades, such as Thatcherism, individuals were seen to be capable of using their own acquired skills and knowledge to adapt to opportunities in a global environment (Ward, 2012). Such developments put the pressure on individuals to take responsibility for their own success (Ward, 2012) a premise cited by the benefits of leadership coaching. Thus leadership coaching in itself could be considered a neoliberalism endeavour reducing the onus on government and society to provide for and support its people with the possibility of oppression and compliance hidden within a coaching offering. With the possibility that neo-liberal values may be embedded in the discourse of coaching (Shoukry, 2018) it is important to examine this premise further. However, Bandura (1978) has a different view suggesting that society needs certain levels of accountability and responsibility and concurring with the view of (Shoukry, 2018) suggests that the fundamental premise of coaching is that while recognising one's role in society, individuals are free and autonomous beings able to make changes in their lives by taking responsibility for their attainments. There is also an

argument that employees could use work coaching to rebuild their understanding, their role and being creative to resist being overpowered by organisational dynamics.

In addition, a core premise of leadership coaching is developing the person from within. This also includes the person being able to recognise the role that society is placing on the person and working with them to make changes where they believe they may see themselves as 'oppressed' or controlled by society (Shoukry, 2018, p. 416). While coaching may appear to have an ideology similar to neoliberalism and may be seen as a means of serving the neo-liberal status quo, it is incumbent on leaders and leaders who have been trained in coaching to recognise this possibility and work independently with coachees to be able to use coaching as 'an enabler for significant change' (Shoukry, 2018, p. 417). This includes leaders having a more holistic approach to their coaching and supporting a critical reflective approach to their actions. By using these leadership coaching skills they can help teachers think about themselves and 'what their goals for schooling may be' (Apple, 2006, p. 23).

### **2.3 The impact of effective leadership**

There is a wide range of empirical findings in relation to educational leadership, highlighting the positive impact that effective leadership has on organisational learning outcomes (Bush, 2007; Day, 2007; Gorham et al., 2008; Harris and Jones, 2018). While there are different styles of leadership (from transformational, collaborative, to distributive), the core purpose of leadership for principals is to do with learning, with accountability emerging as a by-product of the role (Sardar and Galdames, 2018). However, in recent years, the role of educational leaders has been met with many challenges. Accountability has been underestimated (Gross, 2018) and the managerial tasks of principalship have now left principals underprepared for the leadership aspect of their role.

Much research has been undertaken around the vital role the school principal plays in affecting student learning, and how the role of the school principal is one of the most "challenging jobs in education" due to the "time and energy" required for the role

(Schneider, 2018, p.1). As such, principals often need to act as “buffers” to the large range of stakeholders they need to manage and often from multiple stakeholders at the same time (Slater et al., 2018, p.126).

Due to such demands and the emergence of neo-liberal agendas from government, the role of a school leader has changed in scope, and with this “evolution” comes a “greater appreciation for the need to support both new and experienced leaders” (Chase, 2018, p.19). In attempting to address these challenges and demands, organisations must continually innovate in order to maintain their place in a dynamic marketplace (Fillery-Travis and Lane, 2006). Leadership has never been as important (Peltier, 2010), so organisations have looked at leadership as a way to drive efficiency, often putting in place support systems such as training and development, staff appraisal systems, and performance targets or key performance indicators. Using self-reflection of work practices and the personal development of the leader, leadership coaching psychology has emerged as a central aspect of many organisations’ work, with leadership coaching psychology now being used by many organisations to develop leaders and staff (Fillery-Travis and Lane, 2006; Kegan and Lahey, 2009). In Ireland organisations in both public and private sectors are engaging in leadership coaching such as the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Irish Civil Service, Allied Irish Banks (AIB) and Irish Life and industries such as Valeo and John Sisk and Son.

With the emergence of the neoliberal agenda from the business and corporate world, accountability and autonomy are now “critical issues in school management” (Hung, 2017, p.27). Consequently, the opportunity to offer leadership coaching to school leaders is a key development in educational leadership support in Ireland. For Tompkins (2018), organisations need to be more effective in the way they operate, due to the globalised world, and leadership coaching is a means to support this. The emergence of coaching in education as a support system in Ireland is the government’s response to such pressures of workload and responsibility. When questioned about the workload and the stress of the role, government are quick to respond that coaching is now available to support principals in their challenging role. As discussed previously, both neo-liberalism and

leadership coaching use similar language, with both about improving performance, effectiveness and improvement, however leadership coaching aims to improve areas in one's life that comes from within the person, with neoliberalism usually an imposed type of control.

Having considered the neoliberalism agenda that is evident in today's world, and with leadership coaching as a support to this challenge, it is important to understand what is meant exactly by coaching, to consider the history of coaching in leadership and its historical context, with examples of practice from both the business world and educational sector.

#### **2.4 Coaching background and history.**

“Coaching psychology is now seen as a mainstream means of enhancing performance” (Grant et al., 2009, p.396).

There are many examples of coaching practice in action, in folklore, in story, and in literature for millennia. The Chinese philosopher, Lao-Tzu, spoke of leaders 3,000 years ago and, “of their best leaders, when their work is done, their task accomplished, the people all say we did it ourselves” (Hasselbein, 2002, p.25). This facilitative type of leadership formed the basis of effective coaching practice. Coaching psychology can be also traced back almost 2000 years ago to Socrates and his use of effective questioning through Socratic dialogue and his quest for a better life (Passmore & Fillery Travis, 2011; Wahl et al., 2013). This was also developed by Plato and Aristotle who continued the quest for a happy life.

In more recent centuries, philosophers such as Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) wrote about freedom of choice and the idea of a person being different in different contexts, no longer experiencing outside reality as an alien world, but instead as one of his own projection and achievement. This was further developed with many ideas from Nietzsche (1844-1900) of thinking for oneself, even embracing confrontation and conflict, which in turn gave way to a dialogue of a coaching nature towards self-improvement in the world (Peltier, 2010).

“The existential way of living and coaching provides a thoughtful and energetic approach to things” and the idea of the coaching mantra, that coachees have the answers within, is a much more effective outcome based on the premise that “generally most people don’t like being told what to do” (Peltier, 2010, p.172).

In more recent years, coaching has become evident in sports and in the 1970s, coaching was aimed at improving the performance of sporting athletes. Since the 1970’s, coaching psychology has been used, not only in sport, but also in business and politics to support personal and professional development and is a process that enables learning and development to take place, with a view to increasing performance across a range of areas (Beere and Broughton, 2013; Trujillo, 2018). While sports coaching is a topic that dates back to the 1970s and was a well-established practice in sports performance, athletic coaches migrated from sport to business in the 1970’s, with many sports coaches writing business books for corporations using athletic coaching experience. This was a great success in the business world, especially for men who saw coaching as a type of *macho* endeavour, as opposed to psychotherapy or counselling, which was associated with weakness and inadequacy. While in the 1970s, some work was carried out on the transfer of coaching psychology from sport to business, it was not until the 1990s that a real explosion of coaching in the business world began to emerge (Peltier, 2010).

The increased level of literature in recent years in the area of coaching psychology and the adaptation of coaching as a leadership skill, demonstrates that coaching psychology is here to stay as a leadership skill (Peltier, 2010). In recent years, coaching has evolved, with influences from many genres such as psychology, business, counselling, and psychotherapy. It has also been influenced by popular psychology that has made its way as a commercial force in the business world. However, coaching as a profession is still under question (Bonaiuto et al., 2008; Passmore & Fillery Travis, 2011), and more research is required to differentiate it from merely the helpfulness of others and on what does and does not particularly work (Passmore & Fillery Travis, 2011). For this to be supported, evidence of what works from research is required, and on how and why it works (Passmore & Fillery Travis, 2011).

For Peterson (2011) one of the dangers of coaching as a process is that often coaches can come from questionable training backgrounds, and with the lack of accreditation and criteria for setting up a practice, it is not unusual for a coach to do a weekend course and set themselves up as a leadership coach, offering one on one or group coaching. Peterson (2011, p.534) cited that it is easy to become a coach with a “solid base of intelligence, maturity, emotional intelligence and basic social and communication skills”. To achieve fast results, many popular executive coaches model their interventions on those used by sports coaches, employing techniques that reject out of hand any introspective process that can take time and may cause “paralysis by analysis.” The idea that an executive coach can help employees improve performance quickly is a great selling point to CEOs, who put the bottom line first (Berglas, 2002).

However, this can lead to further issues, with executive coaches who are unskilled in the dynamics of psychotherapy often exploiting the powerful hold they have over their clients/employees. Sadly, misguided coaches often ignore and even create deep-rooted psychological problems that only psychotherapy can fix. At times coaches too often seek the quick solution to bottom line results through a coaching process. (Berglas, 2002). Companies that engage coaches need to draw on the expertise of both psychotherapists and executive coaches with legitimate skills. Employees must be ready and agreeable to coaching and have an agreed area for development. One of the biggest failures of the coaching process is failure for coaches and coachees and /or organisations to agree a suitable area for development (Kilburg, 2001). Organisations have a duty of care to screen out employees not psychologically prepared or predisposed to benefit from the process. Equally important, organisations who use a coaching approach to leadership should have mental health professionals available to review coaching outcomes. This helps to ensure that coaches are not ignoring underlying problems or creating new ones (Berglas, 2002). Such a fast track approach to coaching competence is why there is a need for regulation of the industry. For such reasons it is imperative that organisations adapting coaching as a process, need to set adequate standards for those who they employ as leadership coaches.

#### **2.4.1 Definition of coaching**

Peltier (2010) referenced two main forms of coaching, one at an executive level in leadership, filtering down the organisation and the other, a dimension of management coaching, which involved a day to day skills exercised by managers at all levels within the organisation. According to Page and De Haan, (2014, p. 582), executive coaching can be defined as a form of “organisational learning through one to one conversations that facilitates development for a leader”. It is an empowering process that aims to draw out solutions through effective listening, asking powerful questions and using feedback so that people take ownership (Canfield and Chee, 2013). While in the past it may have been deemed as a remedial activity, it is now embraced by business leaders and corporations as a means to develop the potential of employees. While most coaching is dyadic in nature (one coach and one coachee), group (one coach, and two or more coachees), or peer (colleagues that coach each other) other constructs are also possible. Beere and Broughton (2013), stated that coaching is both directional and non-directional, with the belief of the coach that, through effective open and challenging questioning, the coachee has the solution to their problem within. This is the preferred route of coaching, as coachees use their own skill set and resources to deal with their own chosen area for personal development. Beere and Broughton (2013, p. 29), referred to this as the “internal locus of control”. This focused the attention of the person to get them to assume their own control of, and responsibility for, the action being taken. It also directed possibilities, self-awareness and self-creativity. Pezaro (2019), maintained that although 95% of people think they are self-aware, only 10-15% of people are; highlighting the need for leadership development such as coaching.

Coaches also require certain skills such as active listening, a respectful relationship, being non-judgemental and inspiring influence, but being somewhat efficient in moving the coachee forward under “their own steam” (Beere and Broughton, 2013, p. 25). Peterson (2011) identified the following as necessary skills for effective coaching:

- 1) Asking questions that challenge assumptions and help reframe issues



- 2) Offering feedback and advice including third party feedback from interviews or surveys
- 3) Spaced practice and repetition
- 4) Using simple coaching formulas such as the GROW model

Indeed, coaching often uses an overarching framework such as GROW, which stands for Goal, Reality, Options, Way forward, and GROUP, which stands for Goal, Reality, Options, Understanding others, Perform. These frameworks are used to work through sessions with clients, with the responsibility for change or future action lying with the coachee (Brown & Grant, 2010). While other supports such as psychometric testing, successful questioning, and various psychology models are used, the GROW model sits at the core of most coaching sessions.

A distinction is often made between coaching and coaching psychology. For Palmer and Whybrow, (2006), coaching was directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance or skill through tutoring or instruction or the learning and development of another. This contrasted with coaching psychology, which is enhancing performance in work and personal life, with the emphasis being non-clinical work; instead, it is based on models of coaching that are grounded in established therapeutic approaches. While they may overlap and be close in definition, there are slight variations, often coming from the various backgrounds and qualifications of the coach.

Whybrow et al., (2012, p. 72), drew our attention to distinctive categories in the coaching process stating “there are many theoretical and philosophical underpinnings to coaching psychology”. These can be mapped on to concepts and debates within complexity science, such as the existential approaches and ideas rooted in personal construct psychology, with solution focused approaches and systems being used. During the 1960’s, coaching psychologists began to explore coaching from within humanist traditions and the emergence of the positive psychology movement (Grant, 2006).

Grant (2006), highlighted that an important agreement, central to definitions of coaching, is the assumption of “an absence of serious mental health problems in the client” and

that the client is resourceful and willing to engage in the coaching process of collaborative goal setting, brain storming, and some aspect of action planning (Grant, 2006, p.13). This process of goal setting and action planning may involve individualised solution focused coaching that might stretch the coachee, but should always be within the confines of what Grant calls “best ethical and professional practice” (Grant, 2006, p.13).

While contemporary coaching is a cross disciplinary methodology, there is a great amount of diversity within it. For Grant (2006), this can be both a strength and limitation of the process; the strength being the skills that may be present, and the limitation being the lack of clarity of what coaching is. While acknowledging the many interchangeable terms associated with coaching, including leadership coaching, executive coaching, personal coaching, and coaching psychology, they all refer to a type of positive psychology that is based on enhancing performance by working within a coach/coachee relationship.

However, coaching as an intervention needs a framework to be effective, and so in recent years, there has been a shift towards evidence based approaches to coaching, with best current knowledge being used to design, implement, and deliver coaching interventions. Best knowledge is best understood as referring to information from contemporary valid research theory and practice (Cavanagh & Grant, 2006). For this to take place, numerous frameworks have been proposed. Bonaiuto et al., (2008, p. 4) concluded that, common to all the different approaches to coaching interventions, are the use of certain techniques (coaching models) and methodologies (using a framework that guides the process), with five main stages: a) building a relationship; b) initial assessment; c) an intervention; d) follow up/feedback; and e) final evaluation. These stages underpin a framework for what coaching is, and how effective coaching is as an intervention. Additionally, Saporito (1996), claimed coaching should have four phases: a) Context definition (analysis of the client, who is involved, needs, personality, climate, organisation); b) Individual analysis (focus on the person, motivations, values, style); c) a development plan (both coach and coachee involved in the coach’s needs); and d) Implementation. Elements of the frameworks developed by Bonaiuto et al., (2008) and the phases identified by Saporito (1996) can be mapped on to the more holistic

framework devised by Kilburg (2001, p. 256) (see Figure 2), where there is an overlapping of the different variables, with the coach needing to consider each aspect of the model.

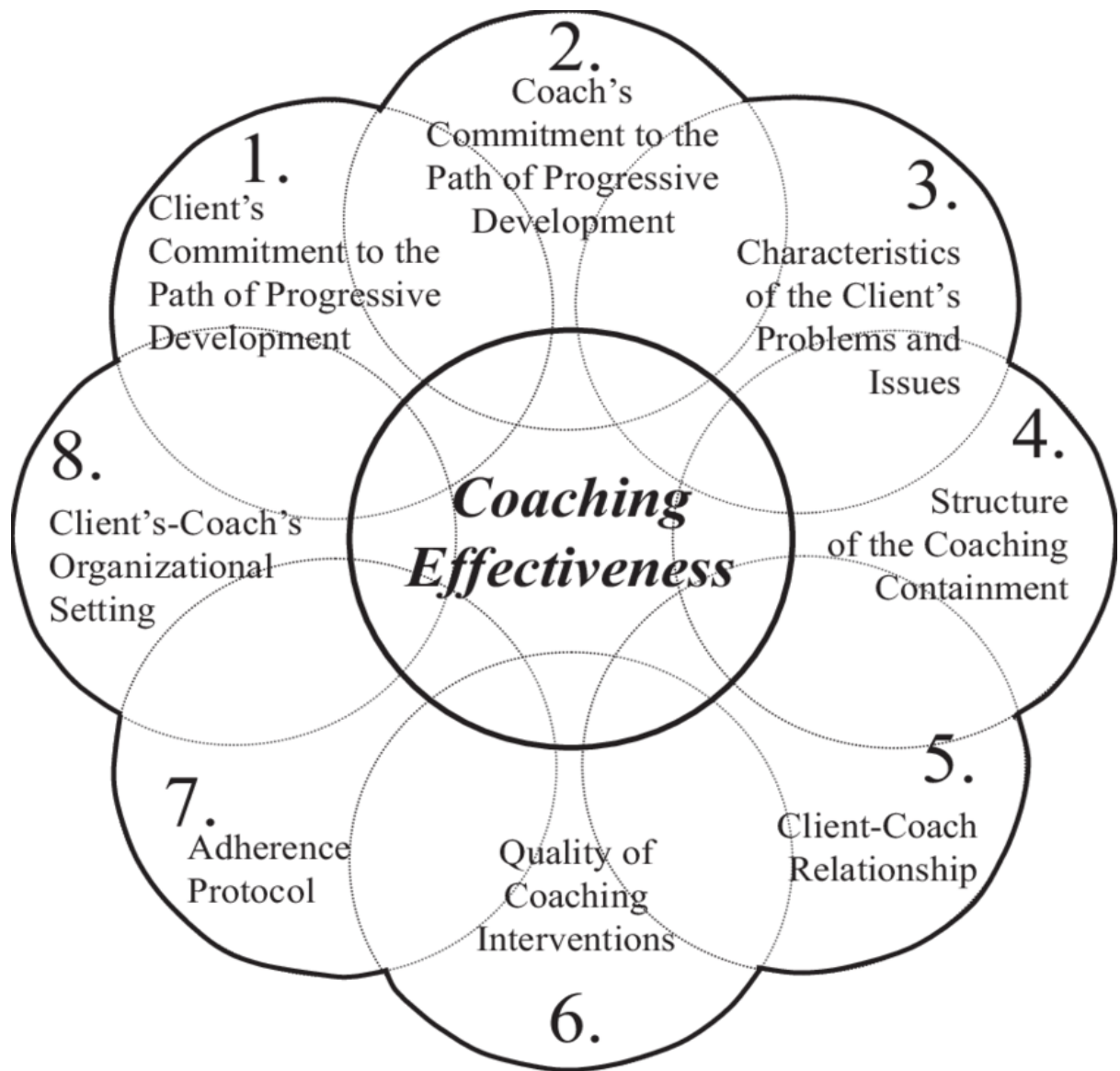


Figure 2 Coaching Effectiveness, (Kilburg, 2001, p. 256).

For Kilburg (2001), for coaching to be effective, it must have the client's commitment, the coach's commitment and a development plan, a structure and ability to deal with the client's problems, have a positive coach-coachee relationship, have quality interventions and coaching models, and adhere to a protocol of coaching, with the organisational setting being the final variable. Taken together, the elements provided by Saporito (1996), Bonaiuto et al., (2008), and Kilburg (2001) constitute a framework for what coaching should be. The models contribute to the effectiveness of coaching based on a coherent definition, identification of best practices, agreement on quality and standards, and, most importantly, outcomes based on action (Bonaiuto et al., 2008).

## **2.5 The role of the coach in the coaching process**

As most coaches do not have a background in behavioural science, a one size fits all approach may be inappropriate (Grant, 2006). Coaches tend to come from various backgrounds such as business, management consulting, human resources, psychology, or counselling. Thus, while the definition of coaching psychology is understood to have that application of behavioural science with clients who do not have clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress, coaching practitioners often have varied backgrounds and qualifications. While psychologists tend to deal with clients who present with clinical issues or mental health concerns, coaches and coaching psychology tends to focus on performance, where no psychopathic conditions are an obstacle (Grant, 2006). The fact that successful executives/leaders do not normally wish to be identified as presenting with such issues, means that it is more likely they would attend a non-psychologist coach who may have a business background, as he/she looks at this as potentially a career improving process. This was supported by Passmore & Fillery-Travis (2011), who stated that coaching clients are mostly not interested in the skills of a psychologist in isolation, but seek skills in business, listening skills, confidentiality, objectivity, intelligence and experience as a coach. Thus, while a psychologist may be more adept at psychological assessment (such as personality profiling and behaviour analysis/diagnosis of disorders) types of work, skills in the other areas mentioned may be more attractive to a client. Peterson (2011) suggested that often a contentious issue

is whether a coachee looks for similar skills to those that they wish to acquire, but concluded that executive coaches do need “a strong understanding of organisational dynamics and the business world to be effective” (Jarvis et al., 2006, p. 91).

For Cavanagh and Grant (2006), however, a coach needs to address the personal when coaching for professional and business life, and therefore being able to address clients from the emotive, values, and metacognitions stance can be a very valuable skill in the effectiveness of the relationship. They called this the internal world of psychology vs working in the external world of business. However, attending a psychologist coach may be “inappropriate”, as the association with “remedial” or “medical model” is off-putting, with some coachees seeing this as attending a psychiatrist type of engagement, which is normally associated with some mental health condition, and may not be perceived well for their leadership role (Grant, 2006, p.16). Generally, clients self-selecting for leadership coaching tend not to suffer from significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress. Hence in broad terms, coaching sits at the intersection of sports, counselling, clinical, and organisational and health psychology. As such, coaching may therefore be recognised as an attractive proposition, and the fact that “coaching psychology has tremendous potential to be a major force for the promotion of well-being, productivity and performance enhancement for the individual, for organisations and corporations and for the broader community as a whole” makes it even more attractive for leaders (Grant, 2006, p.17). Another attraction for leaders is that as a process, coaching normally involves working with people at the higher end of the functioning spectrum, working more towards facilitating well-being and optimal functioning, rather than clinical or counselling psychology (Joseph, 2006). It can also speed up psychological approaches for purposeful change.

However, with so many sub disciplines within psychology, a distinction is thus useful in order to see where the coaching may fit. Assessing the distinctions between the constituent sub disciplines, Grant (2006, p.12) made the point that:

“Clinical and counselling psychologists tend to work with the client who is distressed and/or dysfunctional, coaching psychologists work with well-

functioning clients, using theoretically grounded and scientifically validated techniques to help them to reach goals in their personal and business lives. Coaching is a robust and challenging intervention, is results-driven, delivers tangible added value, is typically a short-term or intermittent engagement, and enables the attainment of high standards or goals”.

According to Yarborough (2018), coaching was focused on the coachee and has some similarities and links to psychotherapy. Both are based on how people behave, how they think and how they experience emotions. While psychotherapy can have a focus on the past, coaching is based on the present and future desired outcomes, designed to enhance the coachees’ performance through one on one coaching sessions over a period of time. Coaching helps to “optimise performance and is less directive”, with the skilled coach helping the coachees to make suggestions for improvement themselves, through effective enquiry training and questioning, active listening and challenging thinking (Yarborough, 2018, pp.50-51). Coaching therefore sits at the crossroads of a number of disciplines.

While certain skill-sets are required for coaches to work with coachees, and acknowledging the fact that coaches do need a training in coaching processes, what is often more important is not what type of coaching background the coach has, but the relationship that exists between the coach and coachees. This is discussed in the next section.

### **2.5.1 The relationship of coach and coachee**

Aguilar (2013) stated that coaching is an essential part of an effective professional development programme, where skills can be built, knowledge can be enhanced and capacity can be built, where no other professional development has gone before. These skills help develop intellect, behaviours, values, and feelings of an educator. There are numerous studies that have demonstrated how useful leadership coaching can be in business. According to Aguilar (2013), coaching encouraged collaborative and reflective practice, which is the aim of any effective teacher (Beere and Broughton, 2013). Peltier (2010, p.206) agreed and stated that “coaches can help clients shift contexts to derive

new and important meanings”. This type of reframing can often motivate leaders to new levels of success. This is congruent with the work of West-Burnham (2009, p.7), who stated “coaching is the single most powerful learning strategy to support personal and professional growth”. But for this process to be successful, a partnership relationship needs to exist between the coach and coachee.

Thus, coaching in essence is defined as a partnership between a coach and a coachee, that engages in a thought-provoking and creative process, and which inspires the coachees to maximize their personal and professional potential (Chase, 2018). The ICF concur that the relationship between the coach and coachee is paramount and that the client should be leading the process towards self-development. Within this partnership, coaches seek to honour the client as the expert in his or her life, and assume that every client is creative, resourceful and whole. Standing on this foundation, Chase (2018, p.15) considered that the coach’s responsibility is thus to:

- Discover, clarify and align with what the client wants to achieve,
- Encourage client self-discovery,
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies,
- Hold the client responsible and accountable,

This belief is congruent with Peltier (2010), Peterson (2011), and Tompkins (2018), who stated that one of the most important contributing factors to the success of coaching was the relationship that exists between the coach and coachee. Peterson (2011, p.537) suggested that the relationship needs an “alliance or partnership.....characterised by trust, acceptance, understanding, open honest communication and other interpersonal factors” and that “trust and a positive working relationship are among the most important if not the single most important elements of executive coaching”. This trust allows participants to take risks; to try new things and to share openly their development needs, personal weaknesses and concerns (Peterson, 2011).



Morris agreed (1998, p.199) and stated that “relationships rule the world” and that by developing relationships with people, projects can then be developed. He saw the most important factor of business leadership as relationships and stated that this soft skill approach will increasingly be the “differentiator of sustainable excellence of every industry in the world”. While Morris was referring to the generic principle of relationships in general, the point is well made. Thus, relationships are at the core of successful change and within the coaching-client relationship, the development of the client is related to the level of trust they have with their coach (Gavin, 2018).

In addition, Peltier (2010), maintained that soft skills have been shown to produce gains, innovations and accomplishments by both individual workers, teams and organisations and that its absence often leads to mediocrity within organisations. This premise is at the core of coaching, building on what now is known as emotional intelligence. According to Gavin (2018, p.142), “truly effective leaders are those that possess a high degree of emotional intelligence.” They have the ability to challenge others and guide them through a change process with the most appropriate support, based on the coachees needs and can arrive at a change that may not have been possible through other means (Peterson, 2011). Gardner (1983) referred to this as the multiple intelligences approach to problem solving using other abilities (logical, linguistic, spatial, musical, kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal) relevant to the society they work within. Developing this point further, Peltier (2010, p.102) suggested that a “healthy application of soft skills has consistently been shown to be a critical factor in success or failure of executive coaching,” often bringing coaches outside their comfort zone. Thus, not only are these skills essential for coaching relationships, they are also required for business excellence.

For Beere and Broughton (2013), although some of the language used in coaching can be challenging, effective coaches, as part of the relationship of trust, can reframe questions to aid the coachee, with “softening frames” like “I am curious about”, “I was just wondering”, “just so I have understood is it”, “could you tell me more on this?”, “how do you know” and the powerful questions such as “what will happen if you do nothing?” and “what other choices do you have?” (Beere and Broughton, 2013, p.115). This type of

questioning, together with feedback, is very effective in driving change with coachees. For, as Beere and Broughton (2013, p.142) related, “feedback is the breakfast of champions”. This is congruent with Peterson (2011, p.540), who stated that feedback is the primary tool for insight and is “a defining aspect of coaching itself”. For Beere and Broughton (2013), coaching as a pedagogy can also have a huge positive effect on student achievement through student feedback (a coaching style), metacognition and thinking strategies, and to get students to challenge their own thinking through coaching. Lynch et al., (2012) also saw feedback as an important aspect of student success. For this to happen effectively a relationship of trust and soft skills was required in order for the coachee to accept feedback and generate change. While these soft skills are often associated with mentoring, and a much more supportive approach, they also are appropriate as part of a coaching relationship where coaching, by contrast, is more self-directed and accountable. Thus, it is important to be able to distinguish between the two approaches in relation to staff development.

## **2.6 Mentoring versus coaching**

One of the themes emerging from the literature is the strong emphasis on separating mentoring and coaching. Coaching differs from mentoring in a number of ways. Mentoring points to a non-experienced/new recruit working together, with a more experienced mentor guiding/instructing and supporting the other through experience gained (Trujillo, 2018). Mentoring is more an “instructional, directive relationship” with a more experienced colleague doing the mentoring (Hicks, 2018, p.3). Coaching, on the other hand, has a performance focus, assumes no psychopathology to be present (this should be referred to trained counsellors/psychotherapists), is a facilitative process and is inward looking, focusing on the coachee devising solutions themselves to enhance performance (Peltier, 2010).

Coaching can also involve working with psychometric instruments, personality assessments and values matrix work (psychological instruments aimed to assess a leader’s personality style and values) in order to improve the coachee’s performance and understanding of how their behaviour may affect others. This involves a trained coach.

Mentoring on the other hand tends not to go to this deep level, and addresses experiences and supports that the mentor has gained through their own work experience, which can be added value to the mentee.

Another differentiator was proposed by Peltier (2010), who suggested that coaching requires certain skillsets for the coach to be effective, often coming from the consulting world (normally at a significant cost). These skills included the ability to build rapport/trust, being a good listener, a confidant, being objective, and someone who can give appropriate feedback and use very effective questioning techniques. Peltier (2010, p. 119) referred to the skills of “cognitive methods”, helping coaches to change the way clients think, particularly regarding distorted thinking such as catastrophizing, polarised thinking or over-generalisations. If these issues are impacting their performance, a coach has permission to address these, even more so than a spouse/partner or friend could do. This type of in-depth work differs from a mentoring approach, with mentoring tending to be a non-remunerated role by a colleague, whose skill-set is very much gained on the role they work within. While both coaching and mentoring may both be used in leadership, they do have different approaches. In addition, mentoring is mostly an internal employee relationship, with coaching often engaging external expertise. This can come at a significant cost and in order to consider such options, it is important to evaluate the impact coaching can have if any.

## **2.7 Coaching effectiveness-the impact?**

Executive Coaching is big business, with the Harvard Business Review reporting that coaching is a 1 billion-dollar industry in the US, with 2 billion dollars being generated world-wide (Sherman & Freas, 2004; ICF, 2012). Closer to home, in 2004 the CIPD reported that 64% of organisations surveyed use external coaches in the UK, with 92% judging it to be “effective”, while 96% reporting coaching as an effective means of learning (Page and De Haan, 2014, p.582).

Grant (2009) began to examine the growth of coaching as a discipline and discovered when examining coaching practice from 1937 to 2011 that coaching had grown from small

numbers in the 1980s, to exploding levels in 2011. Theeboom et al., (2014), also discovered the use of coaching methodologies as a means of enhancing performance and development in organizations, and that it had increased substantially over the last two decades. Interestingly, since its foundation in 1995, the ICF has seen its member count grow to over 20,000 members in over 100 countries by 2012 (ICF, 2012). This growth may be explained by the attractiveness of themes emerging from sport and coaching including drive, learning the fundamentals, having an individualised approach with flexible adaptations, defining your own success, visualisation and learning from feedback on performance (often obtained via video in sport), learning from your mistakes, and communicating with trust and integrity (Peltier, 2010).

“Coaching psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches” (Palmer and Whybrow, 2006, p. 8).

While acknowledging therefore that there has been a considerable amount of interest in the field of coaching in recent years, much of the interest is in the area of executive coaching (Page and De Haan, 2014). Although there is limited literature on the effectiveness of executive coaching, various qualitative case studies have reported that coaching could be effective in helping leaders develop their leadership styles (Grant, 2009). Other authors in the field have supported the view that executive coaching can be very effective and these include Aguilar (2013), Theeboom et al., (2014), and Jones et al., (2016). Beere and Broughton (2013), also discovered that coaching actually leveraged results and increased strengths for participants. It did this more than it supported the remedy of weaknesses. Thus as a results initiative, it has many business benefits (Ogilvy and Ellam-Dyson, 2012).

While coaching is considered a useful tool for both individual and organisational development, the lack of a systematic review of research outcomes of coaching makes it “prone to scepticism” around its effectiveness (Theeboom et al., 2014, p.1). Thus, for Chan and Latham, (2004), there is voluminous practitioner literature evaluating coaching, but few empirical studies that have evaluated the impact of coaching and what are the

most effective characteristics of a coach. They referred to the indirect evidence of social psychology that coaching may change behaviour positively and that often the research is undertaken on a peer to peer basis and without adequate training in the process of research methods. In addition, the current literature of coaching is often from the perspective of the coaching consultant rather than stemming from any academic rigour (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

Various organisations have attempted to attribute the success of coaching to a measureable “return on investment” (ROI), pointing to the tangible benefits of coaching, however this measure has some serious limitations, ignoring such variables as team input and thus making it difficult to measure exactly in financial terms (Theeboom et al., 2014, p.2). Despite this Peterson (2011), in his work, suggested some companies reporting an average return of five to seven times the cost of coaching

Hicks (2018) looked at the non-financial metrics of the proposed benefits of coaching, including such things as cultivating self-awareness and decisiveness, with more effective goal setting being obvious and the ability to adopt to change more effectively. It also included increased motivation, social skills and higher job satisfaction, which led to more enhanced stress management and job satisfaction (Wales, 2002). This in turn led to employees having a better sense of well-being (Gyllensten and Palmer, 2006). The difficulty of measuring the impact of coaching quantitatively often leads to organisations not considering it. While coaching evaluation may often attempt to measure percentage ROI, what is more important is that management is educated on the coaching process, a culture of coaching is supported, and that it is linked to goals that can be monitored (Tompkins, 2018). Organisations need to firstly ask the question as to why they are availing themselves of coaching and if they have closely aligned goals (Tompkins, 2018).

In addressing this question Fillery-Travis and Lane, (2006), suggest that in asking if coaching works, we need to firstly ascertain what is it being used for in the first place? Thus, there is a need to identify the purpose and aim of coaching. In researching this question, they have identified a number of different approaches to coaching. They reference the coaching study survey of 2004 from the school of coaching, UK, (Kubicek,

2002), which gathered data from 1153 organisations. The summary of findings included the use of external coaches (51%), trained internal coaches (41%), with 79% being manager coaches (Fillery-Travis and Lane, 2006). They found that the use of the varying type of coach had a bearing on the impact of success. They also found that the use of an external coach was often a reward for executives, often not related to a work role, but offering the executive room to grow outside of the organisation. However, organisations often found that an external coach encouraged the coachee to leave the organisation and enhance their career prospects elsewhere, particularly if they were being unfulfilled in their current role. Thus, organisations began to require the external coach to undergo a type of organisational induction, ensuring they understood the company, its objectives and the organisation's aim to develop the coachee within the organisation rather than encourage them to leave. Overall, the use of an external coach has been a better approach to executive training in this research, proving more effective than employees undergoing a training course and then going back to work. However, this option can often be a challenge for organisations as Tompkins (2018) pointed out. Not alone do organisations need to consider the enhanced cost of employing an external coach, but also the perception that coaching is deemed to be labour intensive and difficult to assess. He also emphasised the disruptive nature of coaching, where some employees may prefer not to upset the "comfortable status quo" (Tompkins, 2018, p.116).

This is also congruent with the work of Joyce and Showers, (2002), who also validate the use of external coaches, noting that with an external coach, there is an element of review or follow up, unlike traditional training methods. Managers who worked with an external coach were also more likely to set goals, solicit ideas from supervisors and had a higher performance improvement. While performance is often difficult to measure, the measures taken were often sales figures, co-workers' assessment and surveys (Joyce and Showers, 2002). In contrast, the internal coaching/manager methodology was very focused on the requirements of the organisation by an internal manager. It could be deemed very finite, with work improvement being the sole purpose. The issues discovered with this type of coaching included the limited skill sets of internal coaches

(usually a few days training), the resistance that an employee may have with respect to talking with their boss and the perception of the remedial aspect of the relationship (Fillery-Travis and Lane, 2006). According to Page and De Hann (2014), research undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in the UK demonstrated the growing level of external coaching; 64% of organisations surveyed used external coaching, with 92% of the participants judging it to be effective or very effective and 96% agreeing that it was an effective way to promote learning in organisations.

While organisations may choose external or internal coaches, the idea that coaching as a leadership development tool is gaining momentum in recent years. Lai and Mc Dowall, (2014), stated that in the UK, 82% of organisations used coaching, rating it as “the most effective activities of the talent management programmes”, based on a CIPD survey in 2012 (Lai and Mc Dowall, 2014, p. 121).

One of the interesting facts about incorporating a coaching programme into a workplace is that the coach does not have to be an expert in the chosen organisational area allowing the option to recruit external coaches. They just need to be effective at coaching others. The CSL coaching model being offered to school principals who wish to avail of one to one coaching themselves, has resulted in the external recruitment of coaches from a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines who are qualified, registered with a coaching organisation (ICF/EMCC), and have registration at minimum practitioner level. The belief by CSL that coaching can affect performance, regardless of the need for educational leadership experience, is based on the premise that coaching is cross sectorial. While the business world use coaching as a means to improve performance in many organisational settings, the DES may see this as a useful endeavour to bring to educational leadership performance. Thus, in order to assess its merits, it is important to view its impact in various commercial settings to see if this is a suitable process to adapt in education. This is discussed in the next section.

### **2.7.1 Coaching impact in business and corporations**

Dawdy's (2004) study results showed that coaching in the workplace was effective. Working with 62 participants in an engineering firm, supervisors undertook training in a

6 month coaching programme. 90% of the participants who subsequently completed a survey considered coaching to be effective, with 91% reporting it as valuable to their relationships outside of work. Of those surveyed, 75% found it added to their relationships in work. Interestingly, when asked if it had facilitated behavioural change on a scale of 1-7, the mean was 4.34. Other findings included no difference in perception of the success of various coaching tools, 360-degree feedback, psychometrics etc. This study agreed with the norm that “people like to be coached and people perceive that they have changed behaviours as a result” (Fillery-Travis and Lane, 2006, p.32).

Ogilvy and Ellam-Dyson (2012), maintained that this success was also being replicated in the public service. They found that in a small scale public sector study, with coaching line manager support, productivity increased by 88% (Ogilvy and Ellam-Dyson, 2012, p. 40). Similarly, Olivero et al., (1997) undertook additional research in the public sector. They examined the impact of executive coaching provided by internal coaches, and using action research, they sought to ascertain if coaching was a useful support. Thirty-one managers underwent a conventional training programme. Then, eight underwent a coach training programme and coached their peers, every week for two months. The productivity was subsequently measured for each of the managers, after both processes. The results were interesting. The conventional training programme saw a 22.4% increase in productivity after the management training programme, but an 88% increase after the coaching training was employed (Fillery-Travis and Lane, 2006, p.34). While the managers were working on projects that may have increased productivity without these interventions, the results demonstrate that coaching can affect the bottom line. In this research, coaching made a significant difference to the work process.

Additional research carried out by Tooth et al., (2013) measured the effectiveness of coaching using a custom designed survey instrument and examined the reliability of the instrument with 291 coaching participants in Australia in 2011. They measured the quality of the coaching service (Institute of Executive and Leadership Coaching IELC), the areas of benefit gained, and perceptions of value and insight. Not only were they satisfied with the quality of the instrument used, in so far as an instrument can sufficiently measure the



human experience of coaching, but more importantly coaching participants were most satisfied with the coaching experience for developing skills in both intrapersonal and interpersonal areas. As such, 86.3% of participants wanted to work with a coach again, with 78.5% wanting to use the same coach (Tooth et al., 2013, p.7). The main benefits mentioned were:

- Self-awareness
- Ability to look at personal strengths/personal issues
- Ability to give professional and personal feedback to colleagues
- Ability to look at new ways of problem solving
- Ability to have insights on behaviours
- Ability to deal with heated issues constructively
- Confidence to mentor/coach/speak openly
- Ability to communicate ideas persuasively to others

In terms of additional benefits, 51% stated it helped with stress

(Tooth et al., 2013, pp.15-16).

Gegner (1997), in the same vein, examined the impact of coaching with 48 executives looking at 8 dimensions of leadership. While his work was criticised as being reliant on self-reporting, 50% of executives reported satisfaction on a Likert scale (1-10) within the 6-8 range, with 33% in the 9-10 range, demonstrating a high level of satisfaction. However, 100% of the executives reported learning more about themselves or gaining new skills (46 surveys were returned from 146).

A broader perspective was investigated by Smither et al., (2003) in their well-regarded and often referenced study. Conducting one of the largest impact studies on coaching in recent years, including 1202 managers over two consecutive years, the results demonstrated that feedback from clients, supervisors, peers and also subordinates was found to be overall more positive for those managers that worked with an executive coach. While this was carried out in a large global corporation, corporate leadership practice is often replicated in education and, according to CSL Ireland (2015), it is the

success of coaching in the corporate world that is contributing to the rationale for coaching being incorporated into any future leadership development programmes for the public sector.

Grant et al., (2009) also supported the positive impact of coaching, stating that in their research that coaching significantly enhanced goal attainment, resilience and workplace well-being. It reduced stress and depression, with similar results being obtained in education. This is further supported by Page and De Haan, (2014), who stated that coaching had led to improvement around goal-setting, soliciting ideas for improvement and ratings from supervisors. This success was also replicated when assessing coaching with high school teachers (Page and De Haan, 2014).

Hence there are arguments to support the use of coaching as a support mechanism in education with other ancillary benefits. In addition to performance improvements, Gyllensten and Palmer, (2005) found that coaching reduced stress, as measured by the Depression and Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS), with Bowles and Picano, (2006) also finding that coaching enhanced the quality of life of participants. Grant (2009) also concluded that, based on many studies, coaching in non-work settings can “reduce stress, anxiety and depression enhance well-being and resilience” and can be a “positive individual change methodology” (Grant, 2009, p.397). Another interesting account of coaching is that it is often seen as a socially acceptable form of therapy, with clients often taking coaching in order to work on work/life balance, career, or goal setting, all of which contribute to well-being, (Spence et al., 2006).

While there is a lot of research and many studies have been carried out in the field of coaching outcomes, research is still developing, and can often suffer from self-reporting bias and possible objectivity measures. However, the research, overall, provides some indication that executive coaching is an “effective intervention” (Page and De Haan, 2014).

However, the fact that coaching may have some impact in various sectors, does not mean that it may be a suitable means for leadership development in education. The question

needs to be addressed as to whether industry practices should be replicated in education. Moreover, education is not a commodity, and it should not operate like a business selling its products are arguments put forward by many authors (Machin, 2014; Smith and Riley, 2016, p.xii). Conversely, in the world of competitiveness and league tables, some will argue that education should be traded like any other industry. Schools that do not compete with other schools, by marketing their services and achieving certain standards will surely not be attractive options for parents. To develop this business mind-set further, a leadership Diploma programme developed by the DES since 2018 for aspiring leaders, requires participants to spend a week in industry/business and to report on this experience as part of the module assignment. According to the DES the programme aims to engage together senior leaders in business and industry, as well as within the education sector in order to gain comprehensive engagement with the breadth and diversity of leadership in practice. A module on coaching and mentoring is included in this programme, with the central aim of assisting with school improvement and leadership and as a suitable means of developing school leaders with more business acumen. Interestingly, participants of this course noted this business/industry experience as one of the most rewarding parts of the course programme \*. It is therefore important to look at proposed coaching models, and analysing what has happened globally in educational leadership, to which we shall turn. <sup>1</sup>

### **2.7.2 Coaching in Education-Ireland and globally**

The commitment by the DES to offer a leadership coaching support service through CSL for school principals in Irish education demonstrates the commitment to leadership in Irish education. It is well known that effective leaders have a big role to play in developing a vision and leading by example. Such leaders are people who tend to have high expectations and a strong sense of community, with an eye for getting results, trying to enhance the skills of the people that they manage and holding people accountable

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<sup>1</sup> \*(This data were noted as the author lectured and corrected the assignments on this module)

(Gorham et al., 2008). Positive psychology has a valuable contribution to make in educational leadership settings (Devine et al., 2013), as has the coaching of school leaders, teachers and pupils. In Ireland, the current model of coaching available for principal leaders is carried out by qualified practitioners of coaching, who have trained in coaching practice, and have credentials to be eligible for membership of the ICF, the EMCC or equivalent. While they may not all be psychologists, they have undertaken training/qualifications in coaching/coaching psychology, with the qualifications to use psychological instruments and coaching interventions. They aim to work with leaders in education and work to support the many challenges of the role.

With respect to coaching in education, Gross (2018) stated that it can not only have benefits for the coachee, but also benefits the organisation. He stressed the important role the principal plays in any leadership development and the very important link between leadership capacity and overall student achievement. By increasing leadership capability by one standard deviation (in 21 specific areas identified), Gross (2018) stated that the result would be a “statistically significant increase in overall student achievement” (Gross, 2018, p.10).

One study to support the view that leadership coaching can have a big impact in education was carried out in 2004 by the Annenberg Foundation for Educational Reform (AFER), which carried out an extensive study on coaching. It discovered some powerful validations for coaching, concluding that effective coaching encourages collaborative reflective practice, allowed teachers to apply learning at a deep level and supported teachers to apply their learning with students. It also informed practice, promoted reciprocal accountability and supported collective leadership (Aguilar, 2013).

An additional study, carried out by Grisson and Harrington (2010), examined the link between professional development and principal effectiveness. It concluded that formal mentoring/coaching had a positive correlation to principal performance. This was further supported by Joyce and Showers (2002), demonstrating that, of the professional development elements for teachers, theory, demonstration and practice, coaching had the biggest impact on practice.

According to Gross (2018), the role of principals has changed so much in the last 20 years, that no administration programme has sufficiently prepared them for the role. He advocated one to one support to build leadership capacity through coaching providing individuals with the opportunity to learn from “real time situations while developing individual capacity” (Gross, 2018, p.2). Various authors in the field have demonstrated through research that coaching in leadership is a powerful tool, and coaching is now seen as a key focus for educational leadership to enhance educational outcomes.

Additional research carried out in educational leadership on the effectiveness of coaching in America as part of a Ph.D program stated that “teachers and administrators overwhelmingly rated principals who participated in coaching as more effective leaders than those who received additional professional development through university programmes and coursework” (Gross, 2018, p.60). This study represented the views of 38,000 teachers and 7,400 schools. However, this study had some limitations. Not alone was the research limited to one state, and was self-reporting, it also didn’t evaluate formal coaching training, but examined leaders who had attended some element of leadership coaching, which would suggest varying understanding and expertise of the process of leadership coaching. Despite these limitations however it represented the views of a large number of teachers and schools.

Bossi (2008) also conducted research on coaching in education through a qualitative study with two cohorts of principals in California who participated in a coaching programme. She examined whether student achievement increased as a result. The conclusions of the study were that 40 of the 50 schools in which principals participated in the coaching programme, saw growth in the school’s academic performance index. Of the principals interviewed, 96% had remained in the role, building leadership capacity with mindful self-assessment and reflection taking place during the programme.

In another study of formal training programmes for educational leaders/managers, conducted by Chandler et al., (2011), 34% of participants stated that coaching was a part of the organisation’s culture (N=80), 23% said it was part of formal appraisal, 43% said coaching was internal to the organisation (with 11% external), with the conclusion that

coaching was associated with a much higher performance. Skills were also developed in listening, self-understanding of themselves and others and the use of effective questioning. The impact that coaching can have, particularly using the GROW model with staff, was evident in terms of increased ability to problem solve and increased interpersonal skills. Finally, Chandler et al., (2011, p.52), concluded that, while all this appears to be the case, more studies need to be carried out to assist such research.

“Although the authors found that there is some evidence of success in the use of coaching for leadership development in the business field, more research is needed in coaching leaders for both education and business. Based on limited existing empirical research available on the impact of coaching leaders the need for developing clear theoretical model (s) for coaching practice is evident....to validate the field of coaching for both school and business leaders more studies need to be undertaken and published so that data can be released which the authors believe would support the value and importance of implementing a coaching culture regardless of the type of organisation.”

A further argument to support leadership coaching in education relates to how professional development leads to a change in practice. Joyce and Showers (2002) examined a variety of empirical research to determine factors which could help students to become more effective learners. They examined studies on scientific enquiry, mnemonics and cooperative learning concluding that coaching as a CPD process has one of the highest impacts of practice change. According to the authors, coaching seems to contribute to the transfer of teaching in a number of ways:

- 1) Participants practiced new strategies more often and developed greater skills as a result getting support and encouragement from colleagues to do so;
- 2) They used the new acquired skills and strategies more appropriately as they had opportunities to discuss objectives, to think through the potential applications of the new strategies, to experiment and to share teaching material;

- 3) They remembered the knowledge base and retained the skills involved in the new strategy. Using the skills helped memory and deepened understanding and technical mastery;
- 4) They explained the strategies to students; and
- 5) They understood the purposes and uses of the new strategies better and where possible they used them in new situations. (This contrasts with un-coached teachers who tended not to deviate from the precise applications demonstrated to them).

A summary of the findings is demonstrated in table 2.7.2.1

<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ELEMENTS</b>	<b>KNOWLEDGE LEVEL  (Estimate percentage of participants understanding content)</b>	<b>SKILL ATTAINMENT  (Estimate percentage of participants demonstrating proficiency in the instructional practices)</b>	<b>TRANSFER TO PRACTICE  (Estimate percentage of participants regularly implementing instructional practices in the classroom)</b>
<b>Theory</b> (e.g., presenter explains content--what it is, why it is important and how to teach it)	10%	5%	0%
<b>Demonstration</b> (e.g., presenter models instructional practices)	30%	20%	0%
<b>Practice</b> (e.g., participants implement instructional practices during the session)	60%	60%	5%
<b>Coaching</b> (e.g., participants receive ongoing support and guidance when they return to the classroom)	95%	95%	99%

Table 2.7.2. 1 (Joyce and Showers, 2002, chapter 5).



Looking at the professional development methodologies in table 2.7.2.1, when participants availed themselves of theory training, knowledge was increased by just 10%, skills developed by just 5%, with 0% having an impact on practice. Demonstration was somewhat a better methodology, with training knowledge increasing by 30% and skills by 20%; but again with 0% transferred to practice. Practice fared better again, with knowledge increasing by 60%, skills by 60%, but a disappointing 5% change in practice. Compare this to coaching, with a 95% knowledge increase, a 95% increase in skills and a phenomenal 99% change in practice. While this work argued strongly for the use of coaching in professional development, it required a much larger investment by organisations. Coaching can be expensive with a number of ongoing/follow up meetings with a coach, in comparison to the other methodologies, which require very little if any further input once completed.

While this may be true, Chandler et al., (2011), argued that educational leaders are facing unprecedented change, with the need for more teacher effectiveness. Coaching helps educational leaders to address this challenge. While its roots are in the business world, he states that coaching gave individuals the time and space to reflect on practice and thereafter generated a change programme with their team, to essentially improve academic achievement of their students. This is what he termed “effective leadership” in education (Chander et al., 2011, pp.43-45). Aguilar (2013), agreed suggesting that coaching can assist leadership in the school by promoting the implementation of “learning and reciprocal accountability” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 3). The diverse role of the school principal often prevents leaders doing the job they should be doing, which is impacting teaching and learning, with many principals using the support of a coach “to assist with professional development” (Schneider, 2018, p.1).

Leadership coaching in education is leading the way in other countries and it is no surprise that the CSL created a platform for both the coaching and mentoring of school principals in Irish education. Set up to support school leadership, the rationale of coaching in business and its perceived benefits in commercial and industrial organisations has been one of the driving forces behind its rationale.

According to CSL Ireland:

“CSL Coaching is a confidential, one to one personal service which is now available for all school principals. Coaching is a particularly powerful tool and one that has proven to be a highly effective way of developing individual and organisational performance by unlocking potential and capability. Coaching is well established as a leadership development service in large organisations and in industry to date. This is the first time that Irish school leaders will experience coaching for themselves” (CSL, undated)

While some participants of coaching have witnessed the development of themselves as practitioners, organisations (including schools) are seeking to use coaching as a means to enhance productivity results (Ogilvy and Ellam-Dyson, 2012) and it appears that executive coaching can offer both. While we cannot go into schools purporting to raise scores by 50%, we need to manage expectations and articulate what we can accomplish (Aguilar, 2013).

While there are many arguments for and against coaching in education, and the merits of schools as providers of an educational commodity requiring leadership excellence, it appears that in 2020 schools are considered, in essence businesses. As a business or school, the literature suggests leadership coaching can have a bearing on leadership development and school improvement, however it is useful to examine if leadership coaching has any impact on well-being, which is the second research question in this study.

## **2.8 Coaching and leadership well-being**

“The concept of the well-being of employees as a concern to management has been long considered within management thought,” (Edwards and Crump, 2017, p.1).

There is no doubt that attitudes to well-being have increased in prominence in both the private and public sector in recent years and schools are no different. Schools have tended to focus on efficiency in recent times and responding to the performance

requirements of the role, with Ball (2003, p.215) referring to these as the three interrelated “policy technologies; the market, managerialism and performativity” as part of a reformed education. One of the main reasons that well-being is getting more prominence is the fact that there is research to validate that programmes to address well-being can have an impact on bottom line concerns and support organisational reform. According to Acton and Glasgow, (2015), having an understanding of the need for economic business principles is essential to support teacher well-being in schools.

Over the last decade, there has been an increased interest by the DES in health and well-being with numerous initiatives being supported. This includes adding health and well-being to the SPHE curriculum, the roll-out of professional advisers in health and well-being across the country, to support teachers through the PDST and the roll-out of mentoring and coaching for school principals to support their own health and well-being and professional practice. There has also been increased interest from other interested parties, such as the Irish National Teachers Organisation (2012) (INTO) and the IPPN (2017) with calls for principals to be supported in managing the stress of their work and to enhance their own health and well-being.

There are many studies that demonstrate the difficult role of a school principal and how it can affect health and well-being. One such study in 2009 (USA) researching the stressors that principals experience that affect well-being, showed the growing duties of school principals and the overwhelming nature of work, and how principals sought stress relief from the role through a number of initiatives. It concluded that the duties and responsibilities of the role meant that living a healthy lifestyle was simply not possible and that principals needed supports to address the personal stressors associated with the role (Klocko and Wells, 2015). This research finding was supported by Wylie (2008) who studied principals’ stress in New Zealand and concluded that principals should be worried about the stresses of the job and the “imbalance of work and personal life” (Wylie, 2008, p.12). Furthermore, Maxwell and Riley, (2016) concluded the role had “scrutiny stress” factors which affected health and well-being and school functioning, with the role having more stress than most other leadership roles (Maxwell and Riley, 2016, p.484). This also

correlated with research carried out by Riley (2011). Together these studies suggest the role of principal is a stressful one and that principal well-being is becoming an important concern.

According to the IPPN, (2017), there is a need for well-being in schools for both teachers and the principal and a culture of wellness cannot be progressed unless those charged with leading its implementation are themselves looked after. Thus, school principals are critical to a culture of institutional well-being, and are vital for school success (Bush, 2007; Day, 2007; Gorham et al., 2008), with their own health and well-being representing an important part of this success. As “school principals have higher emotional demands and lower well-being than the general population” (Maxwell and Riley, 2016, p. 493), coaching is a useful process to assist leaders with the development of a higher sense of well-being (Sardar and Galdames, 2018). Acknowledging that the role of principal has become very challenging, with work-life balance issues, isolation and stress; principals are expected to perform well for the rest of the school community. Thus there is a need to build resilience and “good well-being” which are important developments for school principals (Sadlar and Galdames, 2018, p.47). According to Peltier (2010 p.xxviii), the workplace has a “powerful influence on a person’s mental health” and coaching is an ideal way to bring the positive potential of psychology to the workplace. This is congruent with work by Grant (2006) and Gyllensten and Palmer, (2006).

From the above, we can see that school principals are critical to the leadership success of a school and in creating a culture of well-being (Bush, 2007; Day, 2007; Gorham et al., 2008) and thus, reducing the impact of stress for the teaching profession has become a focus of much research in recent years. While just surviving stress is not the answer, educational contexts are instead favouring teacher well-being to deal with the neoliberal ideologies that favour competition and the accountability and performativity that goes with it (Acton and Glasgow, 2015). The well-being of teachers has also emerged as a significant issue resulting in turnover being a big issue in certain countries, (Acton and Glasgow, 2015). Ireland has yet to witness this impact. Thus, teacher occupational well-being is a crucial factor in achieving both pedagogical goals for students but also for

success at community level. The link between pedagogical tasks and well-being is therefore closely entwined and has a huge bearing, not only on student outcomes, but also on school success (Soini et al., 2010).

While coaching in education and business appears to demonstrate a positive impact on human experience, it also has been shown to contribute to participant well-being. “Coaching is beneficial to increase resilience and confidence, cope with stressful situations, bounce back from obstacles and emotional detachment from a practical perspective” (Sadlar and Galdames, 2018, p.57). It is a supportive tool and when principals feel supported, it increases their confidence and enhances their resilience, which in turn leads to an improved perception of their own well-being (Sadlar and Galdames, 2018). It is interesting to note that the main motivators which promote job satisfaction are achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement, all of which are intrinsic in nature (Herzberg, 1986). Thus, this is where coaching can really have an impact through the development of these intrinsic motivators and enhance employee well-being.

It is therefore not surprising that head teachers/principals have felt that coaching has been an effective support, to not only deal with their own performance at higher levels, but is also a critical resource or support to develop resilience and well-being both in themselves and others (Perry, 2019). Further research by Klocko and Wells, (2015) and Gyllensten and Palmer (2006) also concurred that health and well-being ideas are a powerful option to help school leaders face the stress in their workload, with coaching a support system that can address this. This view was also supported by Sardar and Galdames (2018) and while this was a small study with six head teachers, it is clear that more research needs to be carried out.

Furthermore, Sardar and Galdames, (2018) endorsed the point, that coaching was emerging as a way to support head teachers and is a support that can help rebuild one of the most neglected area of principal leadership today: well-being and self-care. Due to the constant stress of the role, leadership development needs to promote a system of self-reflection capabilities that enhance leader’s ability to manage such stresses in the complex world of educational leadership. For Sardar and Galdames, (2018), this required

resilience training, self-knowledge training and work life balance training, especially for novice principals, and coaching training is a means to do this.

It is clear that coaching has become an effective tool for the development and support of school leaders and has grown in application and research in recent years (Lovely, 2004; Aguilar, 2013; Chase, 2018). According to Gross (2018), coaching can support principals' development, while helping them deal with the "complex situations" as they work through change (Gross, 2018, p.12). The fact that there has been a considerable increase in workload in recent years and that the job has become more challenging (Maxwell and Riley, 2016), means that a possible link between coaching and well-being could be an attractive aspect of coaching for school leaders. The next section examines what is meant by principal well-being, its benefits and what the role of the principal is for its development.

### **2.8.1 Well-being and its benefits**

While there are many definitions and interpretations of what is meant by health and well-being, health is not just the absence of disease but a positive state of well-being. According to Coon (1995), people who achieved this wellness are both physically and psychologically healthy. They do meaningful work and have meaningful relationships and, as Dodge et al., (2012, p.23) make clear:

"Stable well-being is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. When individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their well-being and vice-versa."

The positive benefits of personal well-being have been known since time immemorial. From the days of Aristotle (384 BC), the concept of eudemonia (which can now be translated as well-being) has evolved with another historical concept of hedonics (Dodge et al., 2012, p.223). The hedonic tradition accentuates constructs such as happiness, positive affect, low negative affect and satisfaction with life. The eudemonia tradition highlights positive psychological functioning and human development.

Put simply, teacher well-being can be defined as an individual sense of personal professional fulfilment, satisfaction, purposefulness and happiness constructed in a collaborative process (peer interaction) with colleagues, parents and students and can be supported by a reasonable workload and sufficient resourcing. It also includes having a sense of belonging to the school community and being able to deal with challenges (Soini et al., 2010). Bornstein et al., (2003) saw it as a state of successful performance throughout life, fulfilling social relationships and the ability to transcend moderate psycho-social and environmental problems. They also referred to the “psychological” feeling of wellness and that it can be subjective (p. 12). While this subjectivity can vary from person to person, the definition consistently steers towards what Edwards and Crump, (2017, p.5) refer to as a state of contentment which would then allow an employee to “flourish” and “achieve their potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation.” It can involve “optimal psychological functioning” with goal setting from coaching contributing to that well-being (Green et al., 2006, p.149).

According to Acton and Glasgow, (2015), the neo-liberal political agenda of accountability and achievement affected teacher’s ability to establish this sense of well-being and the neoliberal rhetoric and discourse have implications for teachers achieving a sense of well-being, due to the demands and stresses of the job. It also had implications for a teacher’s longevity in the job. Nevertheless, people are not “free agents who can do whatever they choose” either, and institutions do require mechanisms that provide safeguards and controls, thus the need for accountability and neoliberal discourse is necessary (Bandura, 1978, p. 357). Yet people are “neither powerless objects controlled by environmental forces” suggesting that peoples’ behaviour, conceptions and environment behave in a reciprocal determinant of each other and leadership coaching can provide skills on how to manage these determinants more effectively thus being able to manage the neo-liberal demands in a way that does not impact their health and well-being adversely (Bandura, 1978, p.357).

While this is a positive development for principals who have developed leadership coaching skills, an additional consideration is that not only are they responsible for their

own well-being and ethics, but that of the staff while also being accountable to the staff and students (Sadlar and Galdames, 2018). This leads to increased anxiety and stress for the leadership role in not only trying to look after their own well-being, but that of the staff and students also. While principals turn to a variety of supports including networking, institutional support and friends in the same role, all the participants of research conducted by Sardar and Galdames, (2018) mentioned coaching, from formal to informal, as “huge support during challenging times” (Sardar and Galdames, 2018, p.54). They also found that coaching gave courage to principals to deal with challenging issues and avoid overwhelming conditions that led to a better sense of well-being. Beere and Broughton, (2013) also found that coaching had a positive impact on the coach, with both parties benefiting from the relationship, but with the coachee taking ownership of change and being able to work on those areas that may help their own well-being. Numerous studies demonstrated that coaching leads to less stress and higher levels of well-being (Bernard, 2018) and that this in turn can lead to a better work performance, making coaching a win on all fronts.

Of course, there are critical engagements with well-being literature who paradoxically state that a culture of wellness can indeed make a person “feel worse about themselves” (Edwards and Crump, 2017, p.7). According to Edwards and Crump, (2017), this well-being can be much individualised at the expense of social responsibility and a lack of consideration for socio-political needs. They also had concerns about this “positive” aspect of well-being, which can vary by definition and from person to person. This perhaps can lead to a sense of not being well as a consequence. Hence what is required to support coaching for well-being is an accepted coaching culture within a school setting.

Finally, the concept of employee well-being is being embraced by governments, who are beginning to recognise the critical nature of work and well-being on the economic success of the country (Brownnett, 2015) and it appears that, while coaching for school leaders is being offered as a development process, they are very much aware that it can lead to both employee performance enhancement and improved well-being. In addition, historically governments/corporations, often concerned about employee absence and



illness, are now recognising that one's quality of life can be "de-medicalised" and the idea of wellness can be promoted from an economical perspective by one's contribution to the community and one's society (Dodge et al., 2012, p.225). This combines the eudemonia and the hedonic traditions, and now that there is a realisation that well-being can enhance productivity, whatever definition is to be agreed, well-being is here to stay. Coaching is a way to enhance that experience in the workplace (Sardar and Galdames, 2018) and the education workplace is no different. While research does advocate the link between well-being and coaching, it still has many challenges in its implementation.

## **2.9 Coaching challenges**

### **2.9.1 Coaching and psychology**

While many organisations use coaching, there have been numerous claims to its effectiveness and potential benefits, with evidence often "anecdotal" (Hicks, 2018, p.1). Other issues such as the difficulty to measure impact and employee perceptions often presenting as a challenge. Peterson (2011) acknowledged that research from coaching is often self-reporting from participants and their management, using diverse data collection methods. However, he also stated that literature reviews aiming to critically examine the available research, concluded that the evidence supports the effectiveness of coaching and concludes his paper stating "the cumulative evidence from multiple sources and methods supports the efficacy of executive coaching" (p. 553). This concurred with Hicks (2018), who stated that most employees believed that coaching had a positive impact on staff. His research also concluded that the age of the employee is no barrier to the benefit, whether it is an employee who has devoted 40 years to the corporate ship or the new millennium worker. He also found that very few saw coaching as "negative", nor did they believe it to be about "problem behaviours in employees" (Hicks, 2018, p. 22).

Acknowledging that coaching appears to be a positive experience generally, it is not without some challenges. One of the main concerns for the coaching industry, according to Lai and Mc Dowall, (2014), is that coaching is a cross disciplinary consideration,

whereas in the past areas for self-improvement were often the work of psychologists, therapists, and psychotherapists. This raises both regulation and credibility issues, but the emergence of the ICF and the EMCC who oversee training of registered coaches has somewhat alleviated this. The fact the coaching is not about therapy, but about performance and self-improvement with a future focus, needs to be made clear to both organisations and participants. Coaching is also very action orientated, and while psychotherapy can often be slow and backward focussed, coaching aims to be quick and future focussed, with fully trained coaches referring clients on to therapy as needed.

The requirement for coaches to have a psychology qualification is still disputed, but such recent developments as Masters in Coaching degrees becoming available, and organisations such as the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) beginning to validate a membership level of coaching training, all point to a change in thought around the requirement of a psychology background. According to Peltier (2010), being a qualified psychologist can be useful, with skills and knowledge to look at the person at a deeper level, from attachment theory to family therapy, and its link to the “individual persons” (Peltier, 2010, p. 138). He also points out that the psychologists’ understanding of psychodynamic theory and behavioural psychology can help coaches understand a person’s view and distortions of the world, which in turn can be a valuable skill in their work with a coachee.

People tend to bring their psyche and personal history to every relationship including coaching and a psychologist will be able to understand the dynamics at play. For Palmer and Whybrow, (2006), psychologists bring more to the table than the GROW model, which is a fundamental part of coaching; they can bring a host of psychological theories that can bring depth to the relationship with the coachee. They have the ability to draw on the understanding of mental health issues and motivation and systems theory, not to mention being able to adapt psychological theories to the coaching process, as an added skill. These include solution focused brief therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, rational emotive behaviour therapy and multi modal therapy (Palmer and Cavanagh, 2006).

While this may be true, organisations decision making shows being a qualified psychologist is not the focus when selecting a coach, but that training and experience at coaching and executive level is a more important requirement. It is also important for coaches to understand their professional and personal limitations; with “half of Americans meeting the criteria for DSM-IV disorder (a diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorder) at sometime in their life”, thus coaches are likely to encounter issues with some coachees (Peltier, 2010, p.285).

A balance is required between standing up to the issues presented at coaching meetings and having the skillset to deal with them, with most coaching being a performance driven and accountable exercise. Based on the research of Lai and Mc Dowall, (2014), when surveying participants (n=87), “appropriate training in psychology and being acquainted with most frequently used psychological coaching interventions and certain degree of organisational/leadership management concepts” will provide a professional coach with the knowledge base to “articulate an effective coaching process” (Lai and Mc Dowall, 2014, p.132). However, Peltier, (2010, p.285) argued that “Coaches are not expected to function as psychologists or psychotherapists.” Coaching tends to move at a fast pace, being action and goal orientated, with business executives moving at a pace “not normally comfortable for psychotherapists” (Peltier, 2010, p.59). While a psychology background is helpful, according to Peltier (2010), a Freudian perspective often tends to a focus on a remedial or corrective action, normally associated with people with dysfunctional personality disorders, while, by contrast, business coaching is geared towards expanding effectiveness, something to which coachees may be more attracted.

There also exists a somewhat conflicting view of what coaching qualifications are necessary for one to become a qualified coaching practitioner. According to Whybrow and Palmer, (2006), in a survey carried out with the British Psychological Society (BPS), members responded, in varying degrees, to what was required to be a coaching psychologist. For some, a psychology degree was required, for others a full doctorate in coaching or coaching psychology was necessary, with a limited number believing that no degree in psychology was necessary to practice as a coaching psychologist. Psychology is

not the only framework of development to bring to coaching and what appears to be more important is competence and skills to underpin practice. Thus, one can have a degree in psychology but not be effective (Whybrow and Palmer, 2006). Further research by Spence et al., (2006) also found a large number of clients that were pursuing career/business/goal-setting worked with coaches from varied backgrounds and qualifications, with only 20% of coaches having a psychology qualification, however, 62% had attended a coaching training school. While being a psychologist may not play a vital role in leadership coaching for many organisations, Peltier (2010) does suggest that a knowledge of the various psychological disorders and traits could be useful, as the coach (psychologist) could be very helpful in supporting clients to avail themselves of the necessary support, whilst also helping the organisation with any psychology difficulty that may present itself. This contrasts with the views of Palmer and Whybrow, (2006), who highlight that business, career, and executive/leadership coaching are the highest area of current focus by most practitioners. This demonstrates while an argument may be made for having qualified coach psychologists, the demand is more focused on these non-psychology areas.

At school level, the focus of coaching is on improving performance and skills and not necessarily on having coaches that are also psychologists. Teachers and principals in Ireland have other supports to deal with issues that may be more suitable to psychology/counselling/psychotherapy, such as the employee assist programme, which is a free service to employees. Where coaching is chosen by the principal, the initial meeting with the coach is designed to agree areas to work on and if issues of a counselling nature are detected, then the process normally involves a referral to a suitable psychotherapist/counsellor. Thus, what is most important for schools is not necessarily a psychologist coach, but a relationship of trust that exists between both parties. Coaching is a very personal endeavour, and it is vital that coaches and coachees have a relationship that has similar understanding of values and beliefs, such that trust and respect between each party can be attained. Effective coaching requires feedback by the coach, regarding their performance, and a trusting relationship needs to exist for this to take place in a

supportive environment. Although coaching can still be a slow process for schools, it can directly affect the whole school system, which is significant (Gross, 2018).

While it will still have some challenges including the desire for coaching as a leadership intervention and the recognition that it would be beneficial for the coachee and the school/organisation, it needs to allow for various dynamics such as personality traits and the values and beliefs of teachers. According to Page and De Haan, (2014), there was a significant influence of personality at play, with executive coaching finding that traits identified during coaching sessions (through personality profiling) different from that of the coach were more effective than having similar traits. This can result in different coach/client relationships being an important consideration for success. This validates why the coaching service on offer to principals in Ireland has an initial meeting for a 'personal chemistry check' with each other, to ensure that both the client and coach can work together effectively. Hence while psychology and coaching can both compliment each other, there are many complexities at play.

### **2.9.2 Coaching implementation**

Another challenge for coaching is what Sardar and Galdames, (2018, p.49) called "implementation". Coaching requires change, and with change comes cultural challenges and staff who are either not ready for it, or slow to adapt to it. Realistically, however, not everyone wants to do coaching. For some, it is an "obstacle" or a "liability" (Sardar and Galdames, 2018, pp. 54-55). It can also cause stress for those who see it as a waste of time (Gyllensten and Palmer, 2006). While stress can be complex, this can be associated with the time required or the unwillingness to participate in what is essentially a sharing partnership, which can lead to further personal stress. For some principals, this can contribute to the inability to bring about a coaching culture that can result in burnout, stress and ill-health. It is therefore essential that leader well-being be addressed in any change process, as leaders who are well prepared for the demands of the role can manage their sustainability and resilience much better. Coaching is one of the aspects of mentoring which can focus on this, where individual's skill development and improvement can be supported (Sardar and Galdames, 2018).

### **2.9.3 Coaching and budgets**

Another consideration of coaching is assessing the relative costs and benefits for school principals. This can be a drawback, as coaching is not cheap, with some coaches requiring in excess of 300 euro per session. It needs DES support for it to be successful financially, and it needs to be seen as a valued support. In addition, it needs to be valued as an appropriate development, even for the most successful principals to avail of themselves. The Irish version of coaching for principals is fully paid for, and entitles the principal to attend seven one and a half hour sessions over the course of the year. The fact that it is supported by the CSL, endorses it further. By contrast, participants of this research received no funding from the DES for pursuing a Diploma in coaching, with some obtaining funding on a business needs basis and others getting a grant contribution in a competitive further education process operated by the DES. This is one of the reasons why so few principals take up the training course in leadership coaching. This will be discussed further in chapter 4.

### **2.9.4 Coaching and time restraints**

There are also additional challenges such as the time required to carry out coaching and attend coaching, the cost of travelling to meet coaches and the requirement for it all to happen outside school time, which makes accessing it a challenge. School leaders already have an overburdened role and unless the benefits of leadership coaching can be witnessed more explicitly, they will opt out of the process. According to the CSL only a small proportion of the available places have been taken up initially, which suggests a possible lack of understanding and knowledge of leadership coaching, and that work has still to be done to promote it correctly.

### **2.9.5 Coaching skills**

In addition, for leadership coaching to be a success, the skills of the coach are important to develop a working relationship based on trust. In this instance, coaching can evolve to be successful. These skills can be used to build both resilience in staff and develop the well-being of the school. Most participants who took part in the study carried out by Sardar and Galdames, (2018), saw a strong connection between coaching psychology and

resilience and the breaking of patterns. In addition, any support system within a school that can build resilience and support, shows staff that leaders care about their well-being (Sardar and Galdames, 2018).

#### **2.9.6 Creating a coaching culture**

According to Beere and Broughton (2013), Ofsted (UK) have been supporting the use of leadership coaching for years in the UK and have found that changes through coaching are not always sustainable. They have instead tried to embed “coaching into your culture” so that coaching is not seen as dependent on a few “enthusiasts” but “permeates the way you do things in schools” (Beere and Broughton, 2013, p.54).

This challenge to a culture change in the workplace results in not everyone willing to be engaged in the process. Some may not want to go inwards, whilst others may distrust the organisation and its intentions. This gives rise to the cultural and geographical attitudes of coaching in various parts of the world. According to David et al., (2014), coaches in the USA are more goal orientated than European coaches. Examining 194 coaches in the USA and Europe through a survey, they not only noted this difference, but also found that the more experience a coach had in Europe, the less likely they were to exhibit a commitment towards goal orientation, an important aspect of any coaching endeavour. Their research further highlighted the negativity associated with the goal orientated aspect of coaching. Referring to goal setting as “gone wild”, their research pointed to the unproductive and often unethical aspects of goal setting, often with unrealistic targets such as time and focus (David et al., 2014, pp.135-136). While acknowledging the positive aspects of coaching with goal orientations such as giving a focus, they found that energising employees and developing persistence and developing the best in people, the concept of efficaciousness and capability of achievement are paramount. While these negative aspects of coaching could be cultural and regional, they may provide an explanation as to why coaching may not always be embraced. On the other hand, it also highlights that coaching can both be “beneficial and problematic” (David et al., 2014, p.137). Acknowledging the cultural challenges of leadership coaching, a further challenge is when

the leader of the organisation is the person who will not engage in the development of coaching.

### **2.9.7 Leadership culture**

Another issue that often presents itself in coaching is leadership competence. This can present itself in the form of unwillingness or apathy by the leader to adapt this new model of leadership or on the other hand leader arrogance. Peltier (2010, pp.332-333) referred to this as the large number of “narcissists at the helm of corporations today” and the “toxic” leadership that potentially can lead the organisation to self-destruct, with such leaders unwilling to work with a coaching programme due to their aggressive and know it all thinking. These leader types are often attractive to organisations initially due to their charm, driven nature and performance orientation, with their destructive personality characteristics invisible to most until much later, when their abusive and manipulative behaviour and lack of personal insight begin to appear. This Machiavellian behaviour can often be a challenge for a coach, with much time needed to build trust. Often the behaviour of such dysfunctional leaders is impacting organisations to such an extent that the coaching process may be a compulsory requirement in order to achieve some behavioural change.

### **2.9.8 Coaching skillset**

According to Fillery-Travis and Lane, (2006), the other contribution to coaching failure was lack of motivation and the inability of the coach to create the right conditions for coachees to thrive. This can be due to a number of reasons. The use of external coaches who tend to have more experience is often reserved for large corporations, resulting in the use of an internal coach often being problematic. The internal coach may be less experienced and have a direct reporting relationship with the coach, which can often result in a conflict, thus the resulting lack of commitment by the organisations for the proposed changes as a result of the coaching, can result in failure (Tompkins, 2018).

Finally, there are other challenges associated with coaching cited by Peterson (2011) who suggests that it takes years of deliberate practice to be a successful coach, with required



feedback, and a commitment to improving practice, given its complexity. Since coaching as a leadership practice is relatively unknown, further research is required to assess its impact. It was the purpose of this study to help to fill this gap in research.

### **2.10 Future developments and gap in research**

In the future, coaching will need to address a number of issues. Firstly, legislation needs to be developed to regulate the industry. Coaches need an affiliation that guarantees standards, ethics and minimum training (Bonaiuto et al., 2008). It is also an industry that requires some level of coaching supervision and a system of referral to therapeutic support, as necessary, that is not viewed negatively by coachees. There is also a need for the diversity of business coaches, consultants and psychologist coaches, and it is important that these groups each know what their role is and what it is not (Peltier, 2010). According to Peltier (2010), there are more coaching organisations making money from the coaching industry than there are regulated competent coaches. Institutes such as the EMCC and ICF are certainly trying to address this with varying levels of membership. However, it is up to each coachee/organisation to research the aims and objectives of coaching and the qualifications and experience they wish to avail of themselves.

Coaching as a profession is still emerging. In the Irish education system, CSL require that coaches working with school leaders must have practitioner level of training, be registered with one of the coaching bodies and have experience that is deemed suitable. Leaders can select from a range of coaches, from those who have MA and PhDs in psychology, to very experienced change consultants and business executives. All coaches are required to have a coaching qualification to Diploma level and associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6 and many years of experience working with clients. They are usually full time in the role and are deemed professional coaches. The menu of options available in selecting a coach with whom to work, adds to the attractiveness of the option for principals, allowing them to pick a suitable fit for their own development journey.

While there is research to validate the idea of coaching as a suitable means to support leadership roles, coaching is not without its issues, such as training, time and expense, not to mention people who may be slow to embrace the change it requires. There are also questions around the validity of research on the impact of coaching, and who is most effective as a coach (Chan & Latham, 2004). There is also scepticism regarding its effectiveness (Theeboom et al., 2014) and whether coaches need specific skills at the personal level, rather than the business level (Cavanagh and Grant, 2006).

It is useful to see the benefits that coaching as a support system can achieve when it is supported and when it becomes part of the culture of an organisation. However, there is not a lot of additional research focusing on the impact that coaching can have on leadership well-being. Thus, empirical research is needed in this area and also to evaluate areas such as what particular skill sets make an effective coach. There is also a gap in the research as to what makes someone “receptive to coaching” (Feldman and Lankau, 2005, p.842). Assessing the tangible impact of coaching is another gap that needs more “rigorous research”, as is whether the effects of “formal” coaching training programmes can actually enhance coaching effects (Feldman & Lankau, 2005, p.843), which was the main research question for this current study.

A further important consideration is that if coaching is so successful, then why has the uptake of school leaders in Ireland taking up free coaching been so poor? The cost implications are not there (as coaching is free), but the time required to commit to coaching may be a significant barrier. While this study is focusing on principals who have completed a coaching Diploma (and associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6), with no financial support or time from management, a bigger question arises as to why so few places allocated to over 4000 principals since 2015 have been availed of. Further research is required to assess this. Perhaps the lack of awareness of what coaching is, the view of it being a remedial activity and the lack of a coaching culture may be important contributions. Research is required to not only answer these questions, but also garner what specifically about coaching contributes to outcomes and what makes it effective (Bonaiuto et al., 2008). This research aimed to answer some of

these questions in the Irish context, with a mixed methods approach, that included both a quantitative survey, followed up with in-depth semi structured interviews.

For Bonaiuto et al., (2008), further evaluation of coaching is necessary that integrates quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This was also the view of Burke and Onwuegbuzie, (2004), who argued for a mixed methods approach to research. Similarly, Bozer (2012, p.14) believed that “The failure to specify the impact of executive coaching is a critical limitation of existing research”. There have only been a handful of empirical studies on the effectiveness and benefits of executive coaching as a development tool in the organisations in which they work and the behavioural changes and organisational outcomes that are generated as effective indicators are also a key area for future research (Bozer, 2012).

### **2.11 Neuroscience and coaching**

In concluding this chapter, it is important to reference neuroscience and the relationship of neuroscience and coaching. According to Grant (2015), there has been a significant growth over the last few years in the coaching world purporting to draw on neuroscience research, as part of coaching. Neuroscience is often referenced when examining behavioural change, and coaching as an endeavour has this at its core. Neuroscience aims to understand how the human brain functions, in terms of molecules, membranes, cell assembly, development plasticity, learning memory, cognition and behaviour, with the brain being “perhaps the most complex electrochemical machine in the universe” (Strumwasser, 1994, p. 315). Neuroscience is one of the fastest growing research areas in science, similar to the growth in coaching, and with the brain involved in our conscious experience and sense of self, coaches who ignore the interrelationship between the brain, body and mind are ignoring substantial research (Bowman et al., 2013).

While the examination of neuroscience goes beyond the scope of this study, some reference to its effect on coaching is worthy of thought. For Bowman et al., (2013), the brain governs behaviour with both “incredible complexity and elegant simplicity” (Bowman et al., 2013, p. 90) with parts of the brain having an interconnectedness that

plays a role in autonomic regulation, emotion and cognition. Neuroscience has helped coaching as a process by gaining insight into motivation in goal setting, what mitigates stress in a person and, more importantly, how long term change can be adopted into behaviour for lasting change, a real premise of coaching (Bowman et al., 2013).

For Bowman et al., (2013), an awareness of the interrelatedness of neural connections and their influences could benefit coaching, as it may assist coaches who wish to further understand the mechanisms that underlie behaviour. While this may be true most coaches in the area of leadership coaching may not have studied neuroscience at such a level. However, Bowman et al., (2013), suggested that coaching is much more than providing a suitable environment for coaching, it required acknowledging feelings as a crucial component in facilitating change with recent trends in neuroscience placing emotion at the centre of coaching issues. For this reason, understanding neuroscience even on a basic level would support coaching as an endeavour. Much more research is required on coaching and neuroscience, as coaching is “framed in high-level abstractions and cognitive processes that are difficult to operationalise” (Bowman et al., 2013, p. 103).

Grant (2015), had a different view, believing that neuroscience will not provide all the answers about behaviour. Referring to the growth of “pop-science bandwagoning” (p. 31), he suggested that coaches, business consultants and leaders are using this framework as a means to justify their work. Grant (2015), argued that there is enough evidence to suggest that coaching in whatever guise, be it executive, leadership and personal, has proven to be a successful driver of change, without any reference to neuroscience. Acknowledging the link to the brain is unnecessary, as surely the brain is required for a coaching relationship to be entered into in the first place, and that looking at brain activity scans (which is often a part of neuroscience) is too simplistic to even try to understand human behaviour. Grant (2015) associated the scientific foundation of coaching to be evident long before neuroscience started to scan brains, therefore he believed that seeking a scientific endorsement through neuroscience was not required for to authenticate its validity, arguing that “good evidence based coaching that is solidly grounded in the behavioural sciences does not need pseudo-neuro psychobabble or

pseudoscience to find a market...” (Grant, 2015, p.34). Grant (2015) concluded by somewhat agreeing with Bowman et al., (2013) by stating that despite these references, neuroscience had the potential to offer great insight, but that it is essential to look at proof for a neuroscientific foundation between coaching and neuroscience, and that there are certainly ways in which both can interact with each other, with coaching possibly being able to assist neuroscience, rather than the other way around.

## **2.12 Chapter summary**

The literature presented in this chapter has given a general overview of coaching practice in leadership, and has further discussed educational leadership. What is clear is that there is a lack of literature on leadership coaching relevant to the Irish context, with the majority of literature coming from Europe and overseas. Various examples of research into coaching have been presented, with literature being collected from various organisations, mostly of a quantitative nature. While this has many uses, what is needed is a more in-depth analysis of coaching practice in the Irish context. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

There are a number of themes that continue to present themselves in the literature on the impact of coaching on leadership/educational leadership and its impact on leadership and well-being. The same themes tend to emerge, which are as follows:

- The neo-liberal agenda in education and how leadership coaching can support leaders to manage the challenges associated with this increased workload
- Coaching vs coaching psychology and the emphasis on behavioural science
- The coach and coachee relationship
- Coaching – finding a definition and coaching vs mentoring/model of coaching/  
coaching implementation
- Coaching in educational leadership
- Links to psychotherapy/counselling-the various disciplines

- Regulation of the industry to assess who coaches are, and whether they are psychologists or business consultants
- Anecdotal evidence of the impact of coaching in organisations, and particular on leadership
- The challenges facing coaching as a leadership endeavour
- The impact coaching has on well-being

### **2.13 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the current literature that addresses the way coaching has evolved from sport, through to leadership development, and how coaching has been used in the business world as a driver of change. It looked at the impact of neo-liberalism on leadership both in the business world and in education, as a backdrop to the emergence of coaching as a driver of change for a new leadership style. It provided a summary of the coaching industry, trends, definitions and the role of the coach. It explained the difference between mentoring and coaching, and provided a rationale for a coaching approach to leadership. It looked at examples of practice globally, both in the business/corporate world and in education, and provided a link to well-being. The chapter concluded by summarising the challenges to creating a coaching culture and the future direction for coaching in education.

The issues highlighted in the literature reviewed, were an integral part of the design of this study. A lack of research in the Irish context on the impact of leadership coaching was a central component of the research design plan. This research design and methodology will be considered in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Research design and methods**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is arranged into a number of parts: firstly, the purpose of the study, factors guiding the research, philosophical underpinnings, triangulation, positionality, participants and theoretical framework are presented. Thereafter the chosen methodology is presented including an approach to the research, methods stage 1, survey/interview design, validity and reliability, methods stage 2 semi structured interviews, interviewing piloting and design. Finally, the data collection and data analysis are discussed and the process of integrating the data and interviews with time-line, limitations, ethical approval and consideration being explored, before coming to the chapter conclusion.

#### **3.2 The purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of leadership coaching psychology on the role of the school principal and the impact, if any, on the principal's well-being. The central research questions were:

How does leadership coaching psychology impact the role of school principal?

How does it impact on principal well-being?

In addition, it was envisaged that the study would provide important data for both the DES and CSL to inform the future direction of leadership coaching in education and address policy weaknesses. No known research on leadership coaching in education in the Irish context is available and this research aimed to address the gap in knowledge.

#### **3.3 Factors guiding the research**

An important element of this research was what Dewitt (2018) referred to as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and the ability and confidence of participants to implement the learnings from coaching training. For Dewitt (2018), this required having a protocol in place

(coaching training), having evidence that this approach works (academic rigour of the programme with both modules and practice), and then seeing an improvement in practice (the core rationale of this research) (Dewitt, 2018, p.43).

It is, thus, a constructive and pragmatic worldview that framed this current research. Constructivism is based on the premise that individuals construct meaning and subsequent understanding, based on the world in which they live and also where they work (Creswell, 2014). Based on the idea that individuals need to make sense of the world in which they live through their own lived experiences, they construct a reality. For constructivists, objective reality is not perceived directly, but is constructed based on a person's own view of the world, based on their sensory input from many sources. This, combined with existing knowledge held, subsequently develops one's view of the world (Pritchard and Wollard, 2010). This is congruent with the work of Bandura (1977), who proposed that people frame their world view, based on how they are impacted by both personal and environmental factors, and that the main factors of behaviour, personal factors and environmental factors are interdependent. For constructivists, the world we build around ourselves evolves through our experiences, through discourse and through social interaction. Culture, context, observation, and shared/personal interactions influence this development, and shape our understanding of reality (Pritchard and Wollard, 2010).

This research was also influenced by the work of philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey. John Dewey was a philosopher and educational reformer and a huge advocate of pragmatism. Dewey suggested that in order to solve problems students needed stimulated learning through discovery, aiming to solve the dispute between learning by effort and learning stimulated by interest (Radu, 2011). He disapproved of the approach of learning by force, suggesting that this was a real drudgery for students. Alternatively, he proposed and promoted the idea of intrinsic motivation and spontaneous interest as conditions necessary for fulfilling any activity of interest.



Dewey claimed that education and learning are social and interactive processes believing that students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with curriculum content allowing the opportunity to take part in their own learning. This he suggests was not about the acquisition of predetermined skills but rather the realisation of one's full potential and the ability to use those skills for the greater good. Acknowledging that education and schooling are instrumental in creating social change and reform, he saw a major flaw in the inactivity of students, but suggested in order for education to be most effective, content must be presented in a way that allows students to relate the information to prior experiences and the subsequent steepening of connection with this knowledge.

Therefore he became a great influencer of experiential models and advocated for experiential education. In addition he claimed that rather than preparing citizens for ethical participation in society, that schools are cultivating passive pupils insisting on the mastery of facts and disciplining of bodies, rather than preparing students to be reflective, autonomous and ethical beings capable of arriving at social truths through critical and enter subjective discourse. He criticised schools for preparing students for docile compliance with authoritarian work and political structures, while discouraging the pursuit of the individual and communal enquiry and higher learning as a result. As an advocate of experiential Learning he criticised education that stifles individual autonomy, particularly when learners are transmitted knowledge in one direction from an expert to a learner. Instead he promoted education that can produce psychological and social goods, that will lead to both present and future social progress.

He also suggested a desire for the lifelong pursuit of learning that is inherent in other professions such as architecture, legal and medical fields and called for this in the field of education, suggesting that further study should fit directly into the demands and opportunities in the vocation of teaching. He was a proponent of enquiry about subjects, particularly about the subjects of education, in order to aspire for intellectual growth. Suggesting that unless a teacher is a student he may not continue to grow as a teacher and inspirer and a director of soul life (Talebi, 2015).

This research enabled many of the factors of Dewey's philosophy to be explored as participants were experiential learners of coaching, motivated by self-learning and vocational development, experiencing content in their own environment as they learned and upskilled. Participants also had to reflect on their own experience of leadership coaching training, and if leadership coaching had any impact on their roles as principals and their efficacy to perform their role. In addition, it aimed to examine if leadership coaching affected their own health and well-being as a result.

Finally, Dewey was an advocate of pragmatism suggesting the strong link between experience based on interaction between the subject and object; between the self and the world and the importance of the integration on the human being into the environment (Radu, 2011). This is at the core of this research study.

A pictorial representation of the research process is depicted in figure 3.

### 3.3.1 Research overview

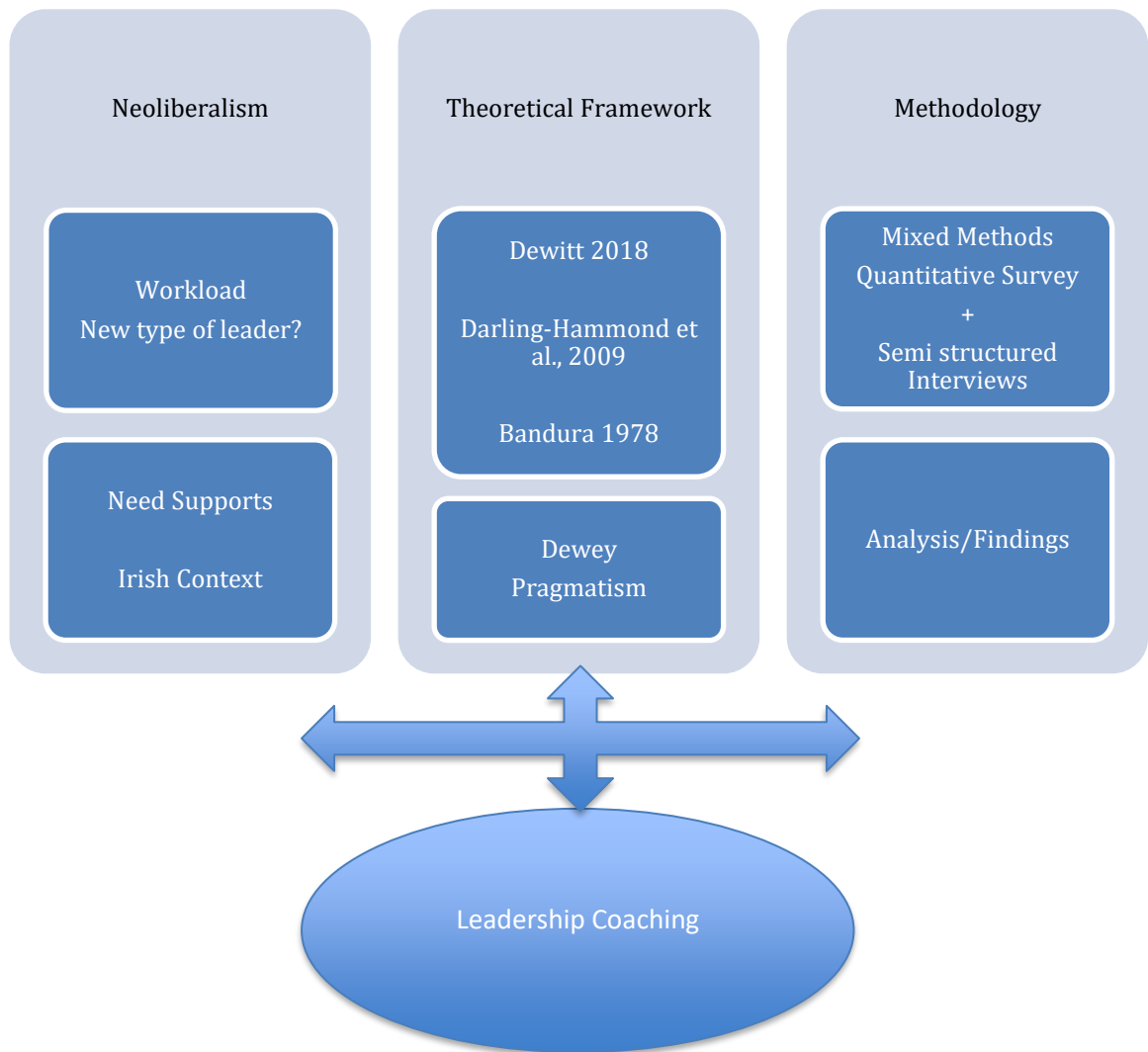


Figure 3 Research overview

### **3.4 Philosophical underpinnings**

There has been much debate in recent years in academic circles regarding educational research, and its potential philosophical underpinnings. Some academics suggest a chosen paradigm that underpins the work from the outset, while other scholars may draw on a number of different underpinnings, through a more pragmatic approach. This debate often arises from a quantitative or qualitative approach. Morgan (2007) referred to the paradigm war, with the growth in the 1970s towards more qualitative type research. This approach was often frowned upon by positivists, who saw numeric data as being more robust, in all cases. However, the debate led to more of an acceptance of qualitative research.

Having a mixed methods approach may appear to cause a conflict between two different approaches. Quantitative purists believe that social observations should be treated in much the same way as physical scientists treat physical phenomena and that social science should be objective (Burke and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For such researchers, this eliminates biases and, as a result, they can remain emotionally detached. A feature of this “rhetorical neutrality” (Burke and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14) is a more formal writing style with an impersonal passive voice.

Qualitative purists, on the other hand, argue for a constructivist and interpretive approach believing that there are multiple constructed realities. They believe that there may be many interpretations of reality through lived experience, prior knowledge of the interpreter and the context of this reality. Both sets of purists view their paradigms as ideal for research, and do not see how they can be mixed. While the positivist paradigm tends to focus on more quantitative research, with the emergence of the more flexible post-positivist approach in more recent years, this contrasts with the constructivist approach, which tends to focus on qualitative research. While both are useful, a third wave has emerged in recent years, with a more pragmatic approach, drawing on the strengths and minimising the weaknesses of both approaches (Burke and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This type of approach aims to bridge the schism.

Dzurec and Abraham (1993, p.75) suggested that although “the objectives, scope and nature of inquiry are consistent across methods and across paradigms”, various approaches are often influenced by the scope and aims of the research. Pragmatism promotes a more flexible or practical application to research being undertaken depending on the scope and nature of the research. It is not committed to any one system of philosophy or reality. It focuses on the “what” and “how” of the research problem (Creswell, 2003, p.11). Early pragmatists “rejected the scientific notion that social enquiry was able to access the ‘truth’ about the real world solely by virtue of a single scientific method” (Mertens, 2005, p.26). Therefore, pragmatism is often seen as the underlying philosophical framework that suits a mixed methods approach. While it may not be used by all mixed methods researchers, (some aligning themselves with transformative paradigms) (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006), its flexibility and the context of this study supports it as a valid approach to the chosen research.

Pragmatism arises out of actions, situations and outcomes and is based on the premise of providing solutions to problems (Flugum, 2018). Leadership coaching has a similar premise, as it also aims to provide solutions to leadership challenges. The pragmatic paradigm provides an opportunity for multiple methods and different worldviews, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis, in a mixed methods study (Creswell, 2003). For Gorard (2004), combining a mixed methods approach could be “a key element in the improvement of social science including educational research” (Gorard, 2004, p.7). Guthrie (2010) outlined his rationale for a pragmatic approach to research, stating that philosophical pragmatism provides a “point of reference for judging the application of methodologies”, using knowledge gathered as useful in terms of its “practical effects” (Guthrie, 2010, p.45). He highlighted the usefulness of engaging with the real world with the research problem implying the data collection, techniques, methods, and methodology appropriate to the research.

The pragmatic approach does not dictate a particular method in order to garner new knowledge about a subject. According to Cohen et al., (2011), pragmatism was the most popular approach to a mixed methods study, with the researcher using a combination of

methods to undertake research. While it has its critics, Burke and Onwuegbuzie, (2004) suggest researchers should be both reflective and strategic in ensuring that the weaknesses of the approach are addressed. The weaknesses of the mixed methods approach include the fact that it can be more time consuming, and that it requires multiple method training and thought on the concurrent approach to gathering data. While this may be true, Punch (2009) suggested that researchers need to consider the purpose of any paradigm, and to define what one's research is concerned with, and what falls legitimately within the limits of the enquiry under three main areas:

- 1) The Ontological question: This relates to the form and nature of reality, and what we can know about it,
- 2) The Epistemological question: This relates to the relationship between the knower and what can be known, and
- 3) The Methodological question: This relates to how the inquirer goes about finding what can be known

(Punch, 2009, p.16).

It also requires what Hesse-Biber (2010) referred to as practising reflexivity and that this helped researchers to get in touch with their own research assumptions, by making them more conscious of these values and assumptions. This involved examining one's positionality and assumed biases in relation to the research. Dewitt (2018) suggested the need to not only reflect (as this is remembering the way it happened, as opposed to the actual way it happened), but also the need to reflect with evidence.

While debates will continue on approaches, Burke and Onwuegbuzie, (2004, p. 17) rightly argue that pragmatism offers a "middle position philosophically and methodologically" and provides an "outcome" based system of enquiry that is "practical" and will help "eliminate doubt" and help the researcher better answer many of the research questions. It will also provide a triangulated approach to the research and ensure it is more robust and expansive. Advantages of this approach include the ability "to add numbers to add precision to words" and "narrative" and can "provide stronger evidence for a conclusion

through convergence and corroboration of findings” (Burke and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.21).

Thus a mixed methods approach with a pragmatic underpinning was the chosen paradigm for this research thesis. It was believed that having a mixed approach would result in more robust research, with the quantitative survey providing the basis for more in-depth discussion through qualitative interviews. This belief was further reinforced when examining the Irish context, as very little known research has been carried out to date in relation to principals who have completed a Diploma in leadership coaching. The researcher had access to relevant participants through the Education Centre network and training centres that were providing the training (Kingstown College, Dublin; Irish Lifecoach Institute) and had a means of distributing the survey to all schools in Ireland through the IPPN, thus expecting a positive response rate. A mixed methods approach was seen as being a very suitable strategy for this research, allowing the opportunity for further triangulation. This is echoed by Guthrie (2010) who suggested that mixed methods, combining both qualitative and quantitative, allows the cancellation of the weaknesses relative to each and provides such an opportunity for triangulation.

### **3.5 Triangulation**

Robust research should demonstrate triangulation in order to have a greater credibility (Guthrie, 2010). A mixed methods approach supports the use of triangulation, and if similar findings come from different sources this results in more credible research. The opposite is also valid and if contradictions are apparent in the dual approach, then further investigation may be required. Based on the premise that mixed methods, consisting of qualitative and quantitative methods, supports the aim of triangulation, this was achieved with a quantitative structured survey followed with 12 semi structured interviews with a sample of 12 participants who had completed the survey and were willing to be interviewed. The quantitative data allowed for statistical data while the qualitative approach allowed a more in-depth analysis and understanding of the study themes, offering insights that contribute to practice or program improvement, moving forward (Patton, 2015). This further strengthened the data which was collected through the

survey giving the research enhanced triangulation. The use of both qualitative and quantitative data further validates the research, and ensures it is more robust (Burke and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

### **3.6 Positionality**

Underlying a researcher's methodology preferences is "a set of value assumptions or axiology" that is brought to social enquiry from one's own life (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p.31). Thus, as a researcher's worldview affects his or her standpoint or approach to research (Hesse-Biber, 2010), researchers need to be aware of their worldview from a critical viewpoint. There are inherent biases and subjectivities in all research, and each person has their own experiences, perceptions, personalities, and societal experiences. Having worked in a number of schools as principal, and subsequently as Director of an Education Centre with responsibility for Continuous Professional Development (CPD), the author has his own beliefs and opinions on the impact of leadership coaching for school principals. Thus, this researcher saw himself in a unique position as both an insider and an outsider researcher.

#### **3.6.1 Researcher's positionality**

My career is in the teaching profession, and I have worked in the primary education sector for the past 16 years. I was originally appointed class teacher before progressing to Principal of a small two teacher school. I subsequently became Administrative Principal of a large urban school. I took a secondment of 5 years from my role as Principal in 2015 to work as Director of Mayo Education Centre. I returned to being an Administrative Principal in September 2019. As Director of Mayo Education Centre I was responsible for the continuous professional development needs of primary and post primary teachers, rolling out the national in-service programme for teachers while also providing a local suite of courses based on the professional needs of teachers.

#### **3.6.2 Researcher's power**

During the years, I have developed an equal professional working relationship with school Principals in the schools in my area and I believe there was no power imbalance between



them and me. I also believe that the power-relations between the adult participants and me the researcher was negligible. These participants were adults working in leadership roles in education and to some extent having a similar career to mine. I felt that the participants did not feel pressured, or coerced into taking part in my research. I was therefore able to confidently explain to them the reason for my research and the need to interview the participants. Being an insider was certainly beneficial, as I had a sense of a shared fellowship and understanding of the role of principal. Having completed the same leadership coaching course (and associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6), the author was very much aware of the content (academic theory) and practice of leadership coaching, and how it has affected the author's own practice (Dewitt, 2018), thus I understood my research aims much better.

The author was also actively involved as a coach and coachee and had availed himself of one on one coaching from the CSL. This was the insider identity, and reflected the authors own bias and assumptions. These biases and assumptions included a belief that coaching could have a positive impact on leadership, the assumption that those who had availed of training programs should have had a positive experience and that despite the challenges of an already overburdened role for school principals, leadership coaching should act as a support. As such, it was imperative for this researcher to be reflective and reflexive, so as to address this bias (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The outsider identity comes in the form of gathering research from participants that were both known and unknown to the author and aimed to address the biases and assumptions of the researcher.

I believe because I was an insider, the participants had a relationship of trust and felt confident to share with me, the researcher, their thoughts on the subject matter. With the participants I shared a similar work interest, to ensure a high quality leadership function for the schools we manage and with the participants I felt we shared similar cultural knowledge and national interests. I felt that we could all relate to one another, with Ganga and Scott (2006) suggesting that our insider status and social proximity can be advantageous, as it makes it easier for us to be accepted, while also facilitating access to the participants; it also allows us to reveal our private selves.

I felt that because I already knew a small number of the participants, a clear benefit of being an insider was that I was able to ask them to complete my survey initially and to negotiate with them the ability to complete a semi structured interview. These participants also shared the survey with some of their eligible contacts and I firmly believe I may not have had such access if I had been an “outsider”. As such, I was not a stranger to most of the participants nor was I a threat with no accountability function over them. A further advantage of being an insider was that I was closer to the reality of what is involved in being a school leader and I had shared a mutual empathy with the participants with the challenges they faced in their roles.

The participants had indicated, in their questionnaire, their willingness to participate in my research and had given me permission to interview them by providing me with their contact details. Therefore, there was no coercion to participate in the interviews. The participants of the interviews also had the autonomy to withdraw at any time. In addition, an email outlining the aims of the research was sent to all interview participants prior to the actual date of the interview. They also signed a consent form.

While I did know some of the participants, there were others I had not met before. Some of those who completed the survey were unknown to me and completed it independent to me. Some of those who came forward for interview were strangers I had not met before. Thus a mixed group were represented in the study with some known and some unknown.

### **3.6.3 Ethical issues for insider research**

All the participants had voluntarily chosen to participate in the study and I was not their superior, where they may have felt pressurised to take part. Therefore, all participants were willing, which would increase the quality of the interview data as they were likely to provide honest responses. I do not believe that I compromised anyone’s responses as I was not involved in any internal politics. There were no uncomfortable questions in the semi structured interviews and participants were given the option to not answer any question they did not wish to answer. In addition, confidentiality was assured thus there was no need for participants to be suspicious of me unintentionally revealing any

information given. Some of the participants already knew me and I had built up trust with them to make them feel that we were participating, as equals, in the interview conversation. These adult participants gave their own independent answers; they did not anticipate what I wanted to hear. Participants were also made aware that they or their school did not stand to gain or lose from the reporting of the knowledge obtained. Therefore, being an insider with respect to the power balance between myself and the participants whom I got the information appeared to be negligible. I shared a common ground with the participants as we were all school Principals in our respective work-places and hopefully they would have felt comfortable speaking to me. From this perspective my insider status would not have compromised the validity; arguably it may have been a key aspect in seeking trustworthiness.

#### **3.6.4 Implications for reliability and validity**

The considering of insider research and the implications for reliability and validity is the subject of much debate and discussion. According to Rooney (2005), validity is a complex and problematic issue because it can be difficult to define, being under-laden with ontological and epistemological questions. However, my role, as a 'practitioner' (p. 6) researcher allowed me to 'adequately capture and represent the informant's subjective reality' (p. 12) with the nature and depth of the relationship and the understanding of the role, helping to determine 'the nature and quality of the data' (p. 12) gathered. Furthermore, by having a mixed methods approach, the quantitative survey allowed the gathering of numeric data, while the qualitative surveys allowed deeper analysis, that aimed to triangulate the results and strengthen the validity of the study.

In addition, the validity of my research was conducted in a rigorous and objective manner. I meticulously designed the survey and subsequently gathered the interview data conscious of not allowing any bias that I may have to impact on the research, or distort the findings. I considered my professional commitment counter-balanced the potential for bias.

For the majority of participants, I was not a stranger. Arguably the interview participants felt more relaxed and free to speak honestly. Where I had not met them before I was not

a stranger to their role as I was a fellow Principal. This familiarity would have made the participants feel more comfortable and happy to engage with the semi structured interviews.

Rooney (2005, p. 7) suggested that 'insider research has the potential to increase validity due to the added richness, honesty, fidelity and authenticity of the information acquired.' Due to my insider research, and understanding of the research area, I was able to apply my subjective interpretations of the participants' responses. My insider perspective was helpful as I have valuable knowledge and experience of the research area, which outsiders would not have. For example, I was aware of the complexity of the role of school principal, the challenges of enabling distributed leadership and the challenges that may present themselves in creating a culture of coaching in a school setting. I was able to use this knowledge to obtain richer interview data.

Finally, my position as an insider researcher does not appear to compromise the trustworthiness of the interview data which I collected. It could be argued that being an insider supported the trustworthiness, of the data collected. I do not consider I had a major impact upon my research. In effect, I was another principal with no accountability function or power over those who chose to participate.

### **3.7 Participants**

Participants of this study were limited to principal teachers (deputy/assistant principals 1 & 2) who had completed a Diploma in Coaching (and associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6). The rationale for this decision related to ensuring that the data collected was valid and reliable. While reflecting on potential participants for this research the author was concerned that by gathering data from principals nationwide on their views on leadership coaching, that this would distort the findings and provide a wide range of data that was unsupported with insufficient expertise in the subject of coaching. The rationale for this decision stems from the wide and varying sources of coaching training that is being offered to school principals. These include one hour sessions on an in-service day, to a half days training on Forbairt and

Misneach training (Newly appointed Principal Courses), to weekend courses offered to the public. There are also offerings from the PDST as part of leadership training that may increase skills but have no academic rigour. The author believed that this would lead to distorted and disjointed data that would lead to weak findings across too many variables. Influenced by the work of Darling-Hammond et al., (2009, p. 5) who suggest that “teachers typically need substantial professional development in a given area (close to 50 hours) to improve their skills and their students’ learning,” the author chose to seek participants who had both achieved academic rigour, practical training and tutor feedback with a QQI endorsement of the programme. This would provide a consistent understanding of leadership coaching and ensure all the data that was collected was from informed participants.

Involving such participants would guarantee that they had studied the six modules of coaching theory, had achieved 100 hours of peer coaching, had been supervised, and had both coached and received coaching, internal and external to the course. They would have received feedback on course assignments, and on their coaching skills. This was chosen as the baseline, or standard, to ensure adequate understanding and practise of leadership coaching.

In addition, participants enrolled on the coaching course voluntarily, without any pressure from their line managers or Boards of Management. Finally, to remove identity of all participants and to help understand gender attitudes to the research, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants.

### **3.8 Theoretical framework**

Robust research should be embedded in a theoretical framework. As this research was based on behaviourist psychology and the impact of the psychology of leadership coaching training, the work of Albert Bandura was chosen as a theoretical framework. Albert Bandura is an American psychologist who has written extensively on social learning theory and behaviourist theory. Drawing on his research into social foundations of thought and action, Bandura believes that one’s self efficacy (one’s judgment of one’s

capabilities to execute courses of action) affects individual's behaviour. For Bandura, how a person behaves, determines the outcomes his/her experiences (Bandura, 2002, p.95).

Behaviour has a number of influential factors that Bandura outlines in his social cognitive influences of behaviourist theory (Bandura, 1978). One's behaviour is impacted by both personal and environmental factors and these main factors of behaviour, personal factors, and environmental factors are interdependent. For Bandura, the relationship of these three factors is via mutual interaction: behaviour (individual), cognition (and other personal factors), and environment, interact mutually and enjoy the same importance. None is inferior or superior to each other, though in some special cases, certain factors probably rise up to a dominant position. The way these three main factors interact is shown in figure 4 (Zhou and Zhou, 2007, pp.7-8).

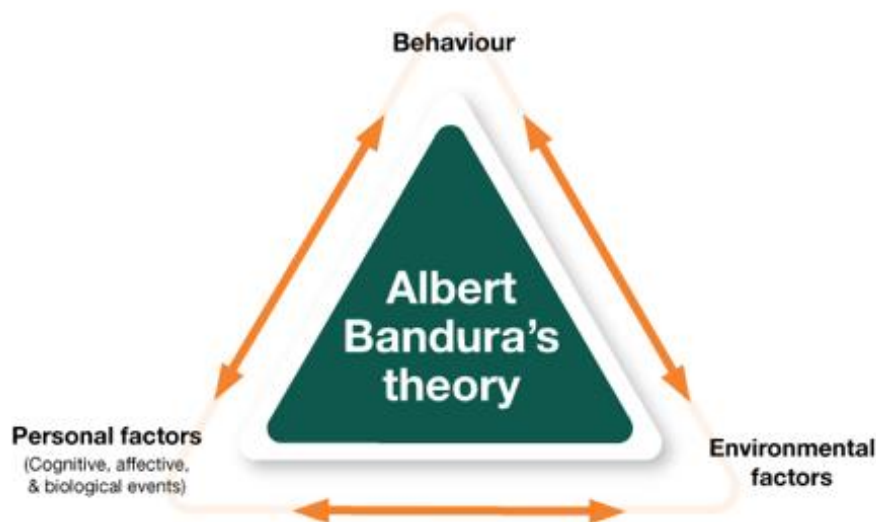


Figure 4 Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism

(Zhou and Zhou, 2007, pp.7-8)

From this behaviourist theoretical perspective, human functioning is seen as an interplay, or relationship, between the three factors in this triad. Bandura's social cognitive theory presents a framework that can explain how an individual behaves, and presents the idea that people are self-regulating organisms, influenced by environmental factors and/or internal impulses. Social cognitive theory views individuals as engaged in their own

development, and can make things happen, or change things, based on their own actions. In other words, what people believe or think about an event subsequently affects their behaviour.

This framework was very useful for this research, as it was the principals' "perception" of their own impact, and association with their own health and well-being, that was being researched. This perception was influenced by the personal factors of cognition, biology and environmental factors, which result in an individual often having a high level/low level of impact, based on their own self-efficacy, depending on these triadic influences. Personal factors such as cognitive, affective and biological events, and environmental factors and behaviour, create a concept of what Bandura calls reciprocal determinism. Strategies aimed at improving one's impact in leadership and the general health and well-being of the individual, can be aimed at by improving one or more aspects of the triad. To fully understand how an individual is influenced by his or her environment, it is important to understand how the individual cognitively processes and interprets those outcomes (Bandura, 1978).

There is also the understanding that through self-evaluation and self-regulation, people can alter their cognitions, which, in turn, can change their behaviour. One of the other influences of this triad is personality. Personality involves "motivational preferences" and "biases" in the way that people view the world (John et al., 2008, p.183). The way an individual sees the world affects their interpretation of events (cognition), which then begins to affect behaviour. Personality also affects the ability to cope with stress levels through this "lens" by which events are viewed. According to Higgins and Scholer, (2010, p.190), it was the differences in the way people cope with events, particularly stressful events, rather than the nature of the stress itself, that are the best predictors of psychological and physical outcomes. People have a preferred way of coping and dealing with stress, and this can provide a meaningful insight into their personalities (Butler, 2018).

For the purposes of this research, this framework helped explain how principals would perceive similar events in different ways, which in turn could affect their own success as a leadership coach, and their own health and well-being as a result. Data from the research was analysed in the context of this framework allowing for the consideration of the triad of influences in Bandura's model.

### **3.8.1 School culture and reciprocal determinism**

Schools are complex organisations and leadership is a complex role (Dewitt, 2018). Principals' ability to use their leadership coaching training to affect behaviour change can be restrained or enhanced by any part of this triad. Environmental factors such as school culture vary from school to school and acceptance by staff of coaching as a model of leadership may not be accepted as a leadership concept. This may result in a coaching approach to leadership by the principal as unworkable. The personal factors of the principal (personality type, values and beliefs) may also affect the success of leadership coaching. This, in turn, may affect the behaviour not only of the principal, but also those being coached. Both coaches (principals) and coachees (teachers) have their own ontological viewpoint of the world, resulting in many different behavioural outcomes in schools. This ontology concerns itself with the reality of existence and core beliefs about the world, (McGovern, 2015). As such, it represents individuals' core beliefs about the nature of the world. These factors would influence the perceptions of participants, when analysing the data collected.

### **3.8.2 Criticisms of the model of reciprocal determinism**

Not all commentators, however, accept Bandura's model as a panacea for the understanding of human behaviour. For some, Bandura's reciprocal determinism model of behaviour is based on theories similar to work developed by neo-Hegelian scientists and philosophers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They claimed that science had moved from stages where explanations were "self-actional" and then "inter-actional" to a stage (still emerging) where explanations were "trans-actional" (Phillips and Orton 1983, p.160). While this may be true, this does not argue for a disconnect between the factors



suggested by Bandura that impact behaviour. Others challenge his acknowledgment of the unidirectional causal account of behaviour, with some critics questioning Bandura's use of the "history" of the interactions between a person and the environment as being important. Such critics deem the term reciprocal determinism as a misleading expression (Phillips and Orton, 1983, p.158).

An additional criticism suggests that the model is based on the supposition that entities (and parts of a system) are altered by all of their relationships, and that a change in any of the relational properties of an entity will change the essential nature of the entity and its potential infinite set of properties (Phillips and Orton, 1983). Human nature is complex and when there are inter-relationships between several people and events, there are so many potential variables (Phillips and Orton, 1983). In response to Phillips and Orton (1983), Bandura suggested a misunderstanding of his model that the "interactants in triadic reciprocity work their mutual effects sequentially over variable time courses" and events are associated with "effects probabilistically rather than inevitably" (Bandura, 1983, p. 166). Bandura also suggested his model is presented as one model of interactionism, in which the three major classes of determinants affect each other, rather than a new causal principle in which the interactants "act simultaneously as a fused whole" (Bandura, 1983, p. 166). Despite Phillips and Orton's (1983) criticism of Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism, they concluded that "his case is strong" (p. 164), with psychologists overlooking the history of influences of behaviour, personal factors and environmental factors in the past. Whilst they may refute the term "reciprocal" in the model title, this does not change the impact on behaviour, of environmental and personal factors, the main thrust of his model.

### **3.9 Methodology**

The design of this research came about over an extended period of development and through a number of revisions, based on reflective practice by the researcher. The impact of reflective practice allows researchers to "refine aspects of their own practice, become aware of false assumptions, contradictions, origins and consequences of their thinking" (Petta et al., 2019, p. 54). This process evolved, resulting in a mixed methods approach,

through the lens of a behavioural framework. Most important in the study was the perception of the impact that leadership coaching had for the role of the school principal and if this was supporting the health and well-being of such principals. A framework for the development of this research project is also presented.

The methodology for this research was identified during the early stages of the project. Although a qualitative approach was originally the chosen methodology, it was decided through reflection that having both a quantitative and qualitative approach in a mixed methods methodology would add to the robustness of the research. Grover and Furnham (2016) recommend that researchers commit to the use of quantitative and qualitative methods (where possible), noting that qualitative data provides unique insights into complex phenomenon. This was further identified as the best approach, when considering the participant sample size, which was limited to those principals who had completed a Diploma in leadership coaching. The rationale for choosing this baseline was the wide range and diverse range of coaching courses on offer. The coaching qualification, carried an associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6, required a minimum level of engagement with coaching theory, that required both academic substance and coaching practice. The course also carried 100 hours of supervised coaching practice. Darling-Hammond et al., (2009, p.5) suggest that “teachers typically need substantial professional development in a given area (close to 50 hours) to improve their skills and their students’ learning” and that, where coaching takes place, there tends to be a “stronger impact” on learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p.9). (This is discussed further in section 3.7)

While these authors do call for a more solid body of evidence in relation to coaching training, they do suggest coaching may actually enhance professional learning. This training, therefore, had the potential to change practice, which is at the core of this research. In addition to this, the timing of the study was a crucial determinant. There is evidence to suggest that outcomes in coaching require a certain incubation period during which time graduates of such programmes as leadership coaching work to clarify, consolidate and then enact the personal learning that coaching may trigger (Spence et al.,

2019). For this reason, graduates of the programme had, at the time of data gathering, completed the programme at least six months prior, with some having completed the programme one year earlier. In addition to this assessment, feedback was an important part of the course with participants not only having to learn academic theory, but apply this to practice with supervised peer reviewed coaching sessions, have a reflective journal throughout and carry out multiple assignments. Therefore, assessment and academic rigour was part of the programme. In addition to this, lecturers gave feedback to participants on improving practice with both oral feedback and written feedback on assignments. Therefore, assessment was a large part of the programme. According to Lynch et al., (2012, p. 180), “optimising the role of assessment in education can greatly enhance student learning.” Reflection was also a large part of the course, with participants having to have a reflective log/journal throughout the programme, demonstrating the implementation theory aspects of the course in practice, and critically evaluating their skills in leadership coaching. For Lynch et al., (2012), this type of critical thinking, feedback and evaluation of their own performance are essential skills for student teachers to develop.

These were all issues that were considered in developing an appropriate methodology. Choosing an appropriate methodology in the research process is often challenging. There is a need for a balance between finding the right design with enough academic rigour, and providing the opportunity to explore the research topic, in an accessible and appropriate manner. This study aimed to combine academic rigour with the capacity to construct meaning from the evidence gathered, by the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches.

Recent developments in academic research have highlighted the importance of mixed methods as an approach to gathering and analysing data. Hesse-Biber (2010) has highlighted five specific reasons researchers should consider mixed methods. The first of these is triangulation and the need to examine the research from more than one method. She refers to the need for a “convergence” of the data collected to enhance the “credibility” of the research (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p.3). This approach enriches the research

and makes the conclusions more acceptable to advocates of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The second reason highlighted revolves around complementarity, which gives the researcher a better understanding of the research problem by using both the numerical and narrative approaches, thus providing a type of cross validation. The third validation concerns the development of the research problem, whereby the results from one method help to develop or inform the other. The fourth reason for using mixed methods is initiation, where a study's findings or contradictions may require further clarification involving a new study, adding new insights to existing theories. The final and fifth reason for mixed methods is expansion, intended to extend the “breath and range of the enquiry” (Hessey-Biber, 2010, p.5).

Mixed methods can be viewed as a third method of research paradigm, sitting beside the common approaches of qualitative and quantitative (Johnson et al., 2007). For Johnson et al., (2007), mixed methods was placed between the extremes of the works of Plato and quantitative research and the Sophists of qualitative research, respecting the wisdom of both viewpoints, while following a middle ground for problems of interest. The primary philosophy of mixed methods is that of pragmatism, an approach to knowledge that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives and positions and standpoints (Johnson et al., 2007).

It has been argued that the convergence of findings from a mixed approach enhances beliefs that the results are more robust or valid and not a “methodological artefact” (Johnson et al., 2007, p.114). This type of triangulation allows the combination of methods in the study of the same phenomenon. For Johnson et al., (2007), triangulation can be broken down further into data triangulation (use of a variety of sources), investigator triangulation (use of different researchers), theory triangulation (use of different theories and perspectives to interpret results), and methodological (use of various methods), which is the approach of this study. The use of various methods allows researchers to be more confident, and can lead to richer data, and a synthesis of ideas (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 115).

The rationale for using a mixed methods approach was further reinforced when examining the Irish context. The number of potential candidates suitable for the research was quite small. Having contacted the two main education providers of this programme, the CSL, IPPN and the Association of Education Centre Networks in Ireland (ATECI-21 full time centres), who provide such programmes, this cohort of principals had been estimated as limited to approximately 54 participants. According to Caracelli & Green (1997), mixed methods can be used as an effective means to gather new understandings of a topic, and as this was a new research area in an Irish context, it was a useful methodological approach.

There was a precedent for the chosen approach to this study, with research carried out by Spence et al., (2019) examining the effects of leadership coaching on participants who had completed a 10-week leadership coaching course. The study by Spence et al., (2019) had a very similar research methodology to that adopted for this thesis. Hence, 50 participants completed a survey with 15 respondents subsequently being interviewed. The data were analysed by looking for implications of a form of coding of text units, with the purpose to reduce, categorise or find the meaning in the material. Each interview was structurally analysed creating codes or building blocks of data, and each text was then summarised by the researchers creating a “naïve understanding” of each story. Once the transcripts were coded for themes (using Atlas.ti software), the researchers formalised their naïve understanding of the interviews into 15 compressed stories allowing the researcher to summarise core content and identify categories and emergent themes. In so doing, the unique point of view expressed in each story was captured, with the coded transcripts and compressed stories subsequently analysed to identify overarching themes. The analysis was intended to determine what insights emerged as a result of the interview questions, and to see how the findings corroborate with the body of existing knowledge. Hence, this tried and tested approach was similar to the chosen approach in this study. Spence et al., (2019) in their study suggested that coaching was a deeply reflective process, requires organisational support to be effective and that organisations should consider what happens after coaching in concluded, which is the purpose and aims

of this research. They also suggest a mixed methods approach to garner the deeper insights into coaching complexities, the chosen approach of this study.

### **3.10 Approach to the research**

Having identified the relevant eligible participants, a survey was sent by email, (See Figure 5). A follow up interview was conducted with 12 participants. The double arrow in Figure 5 signifies the move that researchers carry out to evaluate to what extent the qualitative findings compare with the wider quantitative population, increasing generalisations and validity and allowing the triangulation of results, which may include any contradictions, to gain new insight (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

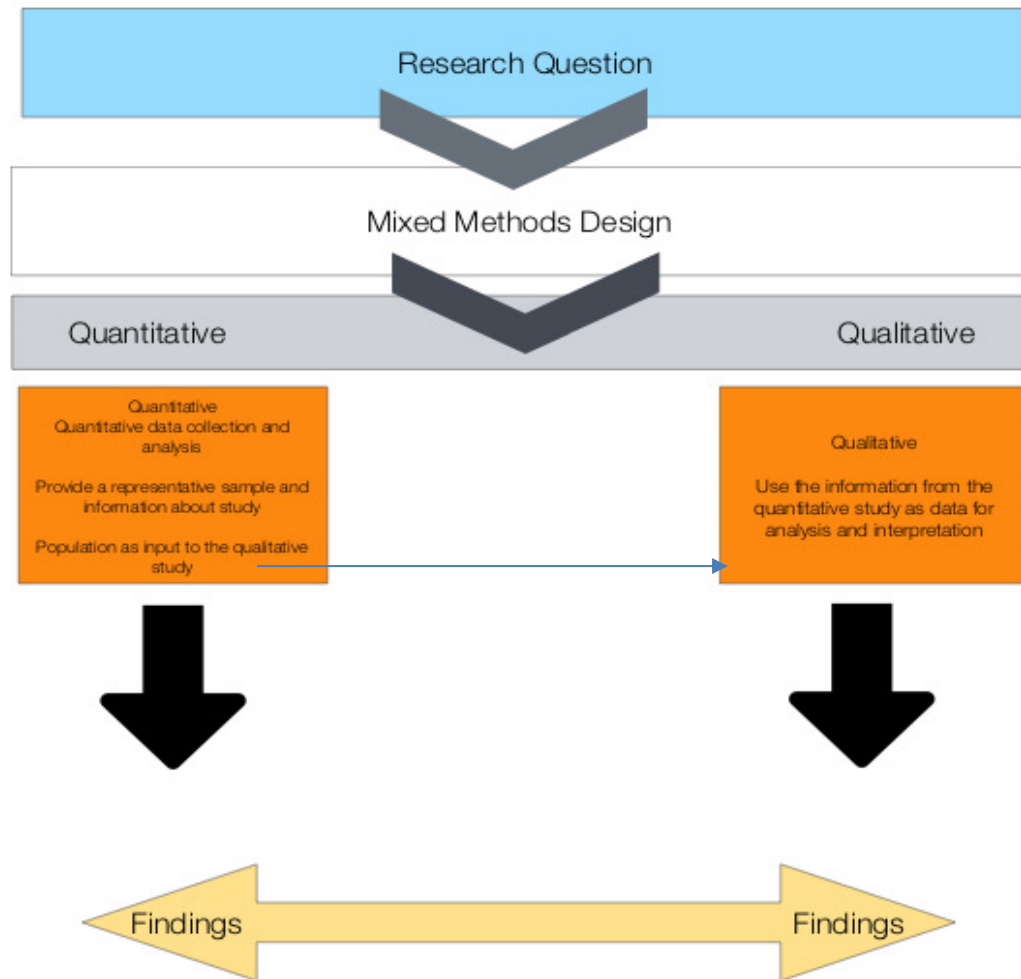


Figure 5 Approach to the research (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p.106).

### **3.10.1 Methods stage 1 quantitative survey**

The use of surveys as a research methodology allows the collection of data from a wide range of respondents. The purpose of this part of the study was to gather baseline data on a more generic level in relation to the impact of leadership coaching on school principals' practice. It gathered background data that would support the research such as school size, type, administrative versus teaching principal (role), number of years' experience as principal, age, and qualifications. Likert type questions were used to gather evidence on the impact of leadership coaching for school principals who had undertaken a coaching Diploma (and associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6).

A survey is a useful means to collect data in relation to the chosen topic being researched (Kyriacou 2001; Grant 2017). Grant (2017) suggested that quantitative approaches to researching coaching psychology have served the coaching psychology research endeavour well but in addition greater insights can be obtained through adding qualitative interviews, hence a mixed methods approach could further enhance the research collected. According to Scherbaum and Shockley, (2015), there are many types of quantitative analysis, but this research aimed to collect data that could allow one to "draw conclusions and insights into the patterns" of this data that was important. As the pool of suitable participants was a finite sample, it was imperative to gather data from as many participants as possible; using the support of a network of organisations that the researcher liaises with daily. These were used to help with response levels.

According to Cohen et al., (2000), there are three important considerations in relation to conducting surveys:

- 1) The purpose and the need to have a central aim. In the case of this research, the central aim was to gather data across a spectrum of school principals in Ireland (age, experience, school type, size). A survey was a useful means to do this.
- 2) The second consideration is about the population that the survey aims to research. There are approximately 3400 primary schools and over 700 post



primary schools in Ireland, and this survey was emailed to all schools through the IPPN (see Appendix 2) and through ATECI. While it was envisaged that most participants would be identified through the Education Centre network, CSL and coaching course providers, it was still planned to contact all schools, so that no outliers were not exempt from participation.

3) The third consideration in conducting surveys is the resources available. This researcher had access to school principals, coaching colleges, IPPN and the Education Centre network, making it easy to contact them. Hence, the survey was easily distributed to the relevant population and in a very “cost efficient” and “effective” way (Cohen et al., 2000, pp.172-173). The aim of the chosen approaches was to target all those eligible participants.

### **3.10.2 Survey/interview design**

Cohen et al., (2000) suggested that the aim of a well-designed survey is to say with a “measure of statistical confidence” that certain factors cluster together and/or correlate to each other (Cohen et al., 2000, p.171). While every effort was made to address design issues in the survey, every sample of a population will involve some “degree of uncertainty” (Scherbaum and Shockley, 2015, p.4). Having a well-designed questionnaire, with clear instructions, should reduce this uncertainty and provide a framework for the collection of relevant data.

The survey and interview questions were very much drawn from reviewing the literature and identifying the emergent themes in the area of leadership coaching, and specifically the work of Dewitt (2018), see table 3.10.3.1. This guided the design and helped to “narrow down” the possibilities of the study (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p.35). It provided a framed context for the study, and highlighted the critical evaluation required for the research. It operated as a consultant to the research guiding the collection of the data. With background data gathered, and with some scope for comment boxes, a 5 point Likert type scale was used to determine the extent of agreement with certain statements pertinent to coaching aims.

Several survey questions were chosen to explore deeper in the qualitative study, so as to continually link findings from the interviews to the more general survey population, thereby strengthening the validity of the findings. For Grant (2017), “qualitative research is fundamental to developing our understanding of coaching processes”, and that the “insights and learnings” around coaching “could not have been obtained through quantitative methods alone” (Grant, 2017, p.317). While this research had both a qualitative and quantitative aspect, the aim of the qualitative research was to ask what Hesse-Biber (2010, p.42) refers to as the “what” and “how” questions, aiming to examine the meaning articulated through social interaction. The quantitative part of the research looked more at the relationship between variables and provided insights prior to conducting the interviews.

#### **3.10.2.1. Piloting the survey**

Three principals piloted the survey prior to it being dispersed to participants. Once feedback was received, some minor errors in the survey were corrected including technical issues being rectified, and the survey was ready for dispersion to the identified participants.

#### **3.10.3 Validity and reliability**

The survey instrument designed for the purposes of this study was guided by the themes of the literature review. It was tailored for school principals (deputy/assistant) working in Irish schools/centres who had completed the accredited Diploma in coaching/leadership coaching/coaching psychology and was influenced by the work of Dewitt (2018). An important element of coaching research requires what Dewitt (2018) referred to as self-efficacy and the ability and confidence to implement learnings from coaching training. Using this framework from the wider literature review, supported the validity and reliability of the approach. Applying Dewitt’s (2018) framework allowed suitable questions to be devised that addressed the themes identified as being important when analysing leadership coaching, both in the survey design, and subsequently in the semi structured interviews. These are outlined in table 3.10.3.1 below:

	<u>How is this evidenced?</u>	<u>Research Questions based on Dewitt's model</u>
<b>1) Protocol in Place</b>	Leadership in practice/ Coaching Diploma Training/ Motivations for enrolment	<u>Survey Questions</u> 7,9,10,11,12,13,23,25,28,30,31,32,35,36 <u>Interview Questions</u> 1, 5,8,9,11,13 Final Question gives participants the opportunity to state anything meaningful/missing on topic
<b>2) Evidence of Approach</b>	Academic rigour/QQI Level 6 component EMCC/ICF Accreditation/100 hours of coaching practice Feedback/assignments Perceptions of course/coaching rigour  Systems/models of coaching	<u>Survey Questions</u> 23,24,26,27,30,31,37 <u>Interview Questions</u> 2,4,5,7,11,12,14, Final Question gives participants the opportunity to state anything meaningful/missing on topic
<b>3) Improvement in Practice</b>	100 Coaching Hours on course  What are you doing differently now? Impact?	<u>Survey Questions</u> 13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,23,24,25,26,27,31,34,35,36 <u>Interview Questions</u> 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12 Final Question gives participants the opportunity to state anything meaningful/missing on topic

Table 3.10.3. 1 Dewitt (2018, p. 43).

See appendix 6 for survey questions.

See appendix 1 for interview questions.

### **3.10.4 Methods stage 2 semi-structured interviews**

Leadership is complex and is “not for the faint hearted” (Dewitt, 2018, p.xv). For Dewitt (2018), more and more tasks have been added to school leaders’ roles, meaning that they can no longer be carried out by just one person. Leadership coaching is now an integral part of the role of the school principal, and while Dewitt highlighted that most leaders don’t get sufficient training or preparation, coaching is now becoming almost compulsory in many educational leadership contexts. Dewitt (2018, p.85) referred to this as the “voluntold” type of involvement, whereby the principals’ superiors are suggesting/requesting that the principal get involved in the coaching process. This may vary from region to region, but coaching as a leadership endeavour is becoming more and more a key focus area of development in the Irish context. “Have you tried the coaching process?” mantra, is the DES response to many of the leadership challenges being faced today. For Dewitt (2018), leadership was more often about responding to a political cycle than a pedagogical or research based one; either way, however, leadership coaching is being strongly recommended from within the DES agenda and with the aim of improving pedagogical practice.

With this complexity in mind, the value of leadership coaching for a leader requires much more understanding and in-depth study, which forms the basis of the rationale of a mixed methods approach, with follow up semi-structured interviews aiming to provide this data. While some principals may look sceptically upon another initiative such as coaching, Dewitt (2018) suggested that principals, as leaders of education, need to step outside their comfort zone and put themselves in that state of vulnerability, so that others can see the value of this and follow suit. This type of personal data is where the qualitative data can add value to the overall research, and contribute on a broader scale to the quality of the research.

The survey aims included gathering quantitative data from participants, while the qualitative interview aimed to focus on the perceptions of the participants of leadership coaching on a more comprehensive or deeper level. The interview “expanded the scope of the questions” allowing the researcher to “probe deeper” into the participants’

experiences of coaching practice activities and leadership (Lonergan et al., 2012, p.111). Given the exploratory nature of this study, the qualitative methods were useful both for their ability to provide insight into the dynamics and complexities inherent in each participant's experience and for the deeper analysis of underlying phenomena that often yield enriched findings (McNulty et al., 2013). This is also supported by Sardar and Galdames, (2018), who suggested using a more qualitative study with a small number of people with in-depth material and the purpose of exploring core themes by selecting participants "purposefully" (Sadlar and Galdames, 2017, p.50).

The following safeguards were implemented when carrying out the interview process. Of those who completed the survey, 12 respondents agreed to be interviewed and provided their email details. These were subsequently contacted to agree upon a follow up interview and over a number of weeks the 12 interviews were completed. Due to the geographical spread of participants across Ireland, some participants who agreed to be interviewed were interviewed by Skype (n=2), but most interviews were carried out in hotels, Education Centres or schools. Diversity was an important part of the interview process and a mix of gender, age, experience and both primary and post primary principals were involved, which allowed for many broad perspectives of leadership coaching experience. Confidentiality and privacy were ensured at all times, and participants were not forced to answer any questions they felt unable or unwilling to answer. Setting the correct scene for interviews ensured a more engaging interview.

The interview process was a beneficial component since it gave the researcher the opportunity to explore deeper the perceptions of leadership coaching with the participants. Asking the 'why', 'how', 'where' and 'when' was useful in exploring in more depth the issues of leadership coaching. According to Cohen et al., (2000), the interview is not simply a matter of collecting more data about life, but "it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable" (Cohen et al., 2000, p.267). This view allowed the researcher to explore the human practices of the research from a pragmatic philosophical viewpoint.

### **3.10.5 Interview piloting and design**

Three respondents were interviewed as a pilot. Having obtained feedback, some slight adjustments were made to the set of questions, with two participants highlighting some questions as being repetitive in nature. This allowed the researcher to adapt the questions and ensure all participants were asked the same questions. It also allowed participants to add anything further to the questions, highlighting that if they felt they had answered it already, there was no need to state it again.

### **3.10.6 Data collection**

Interpretive research is focused on the lived experiences of people who are engaged in the particular phenomenon being studied. This research aimed to explain this phenomenon, and if leadership coaching affected the role of school principal, as experienced by participants of the leadership coaching course. The survey questions focused on the experience of principals in their roles from a leadership/neoliberal perspective, and how coaching as a support system affected their role and their well-being. It also drew from the main themes of examining coaching impact as suggested by Dewitt (2018) (see table 3.1.1).

The following approaches were taken in an attempt to identify as many participants as possible:

- 21 Education centres were analysed to identify the total number from this group who undertook a training course in leadership coaching in the centres. Principals/Deputy/Assistants 1 & 2 were identified from this group.
- IPPN agreed to distribute the survey on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019, with a closing date of 2 weeks, to 3400 primary schools in Ireland through an e-scéal newsletter, (this is a newsletter that issues to every primary school in Ireland a number of times each year by email and post), (See Appendix 2). In addition, various Education Centres nationwide emailed the survey details and link to all post-primary schools in Ireland. The survey deadline was extended to allow further completion of the survey.
- The CSL was contacted and the directors also completed the survey and identified participants who fitted into the data set.

- In addition, the survey link was distributed by two coaching course colleges and was further distributed on the social media platforms Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

These research strategies identified a total population of approximately 54 leaders in education who had also completed the required coaching course. These were subsequently contacted and asked to complete the survey. Information on how to complete the survey was distributed to participants via a detailed email, with the survey designed using SurveyMonkey Inc. The email contained a copy of the survey's URL on the Survey Monkey website. When respondents clicked on the URL, they were automatically taken to the Survey Monkey web site. The survey used mostly Likert type/rating scales, with some open-ended questions used to allow participants to more fully express their opinions. The survey remained accessible for a period of four weeks, but participants were encouraged to complete the survey by 31st March 2019. The researcher was able to track responses and monitor missing data. The survey date was extended to allow a small number to complete it and on 30th April 2019, the survey was closed. The responses were subsequently downloaded to excel and saved in a password protected cloud-based storage in Google Drive. The data were then imported into an SPSS data file for analysis. Some data cleaning was required to identify any errors. Numeric values were assigned to the values and various codes were utilised to define and categorise the data. Due to the small population ( $n=54$ ), errors were easily identified, and participants were contacted to correct any errors.

Descriptive statistics were calculated such as demographics, looking at patterns and correlations. The demographics were identified (age, gender, school type, school size, leadership role, qualifications) to investigate the correlations between these demographics and impact of leadership coaching. Certain demographic comparisons were also calculated with the initial data. Fisher's Exact Test and Spearman's Rho correlation test were also used to investigate the association between two ordinal categorical variables. These tests examined variables such as gender, the number of years' experience as a principal, age, qualifications, school size, and whether the principal was a teaching or administrative principal and looked for correlations between these

factors. Some of the responses to open questions were also exported into Nvivo for independent coding, as these could not be explored statistically. These findings will be discussed further in chapter 4. In total, 48 people from a data set of 54 completed the survey, representing a return rate of 88%. Using statistical analysis, it was established that a population of 54 required a sample of 48 to be able to compute data with 95% confidence levels and a 5% margin of error (which is standard for social research analyses). When it comes to probability sampling, there are three criteria that should be considered:

1. **The size of your target population:** This refers to the total amount of people that are eligible to participate in your survey. Ireland has approximately 3400 primary and 700 post primary principals. However not all principals were eligible for this study as they also had to have completed a Diploma in leadership coaching/coaching accredited with a level 6 component from QQI. This meant the survey size was going to be a small representation of the group known as principals (as principals normally volunteered to undertake such a course and it was not a recognised suggested course of study for leaders) but the research would aim to survey the majority of this group who fit the criteria. The population size was a straight-forward calculation for the researcher, by liaising with organisations such as ATECI, CSL, IPPN and the colleges that provide coaching training.
2. **Your desired confidence level:** This is usually placed at a value of 95% in surveying and describes the confidence level or how sure you can be that your results are correct. With a 95% confidence level, a researcher can be certain that the value of any sample will fall in the range of the margin of error 95% of the time. When choosing a confidence level and margin of error, usually survey researchers will choose a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5+/- . For example, If the results showed that 80% of people had thought leadership coaching had a positive impact on their role as principals, you could say that you are 95% confident that



75-85% (known as the confidence interval) of your targeted population agreed with this.

3. **Your allowed margin of error:** Margin of error depicts the random sampling error that is possible in the research study. This is important because it is impossible to know whether a sample's results are identical with the true value of the population. This value margin of error describes the range in value that the population may have based on the results in the study and is described as a plus or minus value.

In order to achieve this required level of survey responses, the researcher had to do additional work in order to bring this original number up from 36 to 48, which required additional emails, contacting and network approaches. Having reached the required statistical number, the researcher believed all data gathering avenues at that point had been exhausted, aiming to establish baseline data into the range of activities that school leaders were engaged in, particularly around coaching practices.

Following the survey completion, participants who had volunteered to be interviewed were contacted. Participants had completed the survey prior to the interview taking place and were familiar with the generic themes of the research. A schedule of interview times was agreed with all participants and ethical approval, permissions and summary were sent to each participant prior to the interview. Interviews were recorded, with permission being obtained in advance. Privacy was ensured at all times and the researcher ensured locations provided a suitable environment that was undisturbed, private and venues that led to appropriate data sharing. Participants were all asked the same set of structured questions. If participants already answered a question, this was highlighted and opportunity was given to add anything further at that point. The recording was immediately saved to a cloud-based storage system in Google Drive which was password protected with a two-step verification. The recording was deleted from the device and was prepared for transcribing at a later date. The aim of the interviews was to delve deeper into that data gathered from the surveys. According to Lonergan et al., (2012), semi structured interviews were a useful means of triangulation, verifying the

authenticity of data collected. This can give a “more comprehensive account” (Lonergan et al., 2012, p.110).

### **3.10.7 Data analysis**

Various statistical tests were used to analyse the quantitative data. Fisher’s Exact Test was used to calculate the association between two categorical variables. Devised by Ronald Fisher, this test aimed to look at the significance of the deviation from a null hypothesis. Using a P-value it can be calculated exactly, rather than relying on an approximation. Fisher’s Exact Test is also used to determine if there are non-random associations between two categorical variables. It is most commonly applied in smaller sample sizes and where 2 x 2 grid analysis is being investigated and is a better test to use than the chi square test for two dichotomous variables (Vaus, 2002). The Chi-squared test is an approximation and one of its requirements is that the expected count in each cell is a minimum of 5. Although the overall population size in this study was 48, this did not mean that the expected counts in each of the cells was at least 5. The chi-squared test is not that the observed counts in each cell are at least 5, but is that the expected counts in each cell are at least 5 (expected count for each cell = row total\*column total/overall total). For many of the tests of this study, this requirement for the chi-squared test was not met. Even if the requirement was met, Fisher’s Exact Test is an exact test and the chi-squared test is an approximation, so there is no advantage in using the chi-squared test instead of Fisher’s Exact Test. In addition, Fisher’s Exact Test is more computationally intensive and can be applied to any crosstabs even if not a 2\*2 table. As such, Warner (2013) tested associations of the Fisher’s Exact test in a study carried out by Akintomide et al., (2013) and concluded that “Fisher’s Exact Test between two categorical variables is much more widely applicable than basic statistics courses have led learners to believe” (Warner, 2013, p. 281). When examining this study, she noted that Fisher’s Exact Test had been used for all analyses of association, even though the *n* available for analysis is >100 in all analyses reported, and despite the fact that the cross tabulations are not 2 x 2 but 3 x 3 or 3 x 4. “The fact is Fisher’s Exact Test is invaluable in enabling a (valid) test of association to be performed. However, it can also be used in tables where these validity

concerns do not apply and in such circumstances has the advantage that it provides an exact probability for the significance test rather than an approximation" (Warner, 2013, p. 281). Hence, applying Fisher's Exact Test, the researcher sought to determine if any of the variables of gender, role, age or length of service affected the results and if so to establish if there were statistically significant for the findings. Due to the large volume of data gathered, it was decided to use Fisher's Exact Test in sections of the research that best answered the research question; how does leadership coaching psychology impact educational leadership and how does it impact on leader well-being? This test therefore was a useful test to compare variables in this study. All tests were two tailed tests.

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Spearman's Rho was also used to investigate the association between two ordinal categorical variables. Devised by Charles Spearman, the test aimed to assess how well the relationship between two variables could be described using a monotonic function, (a monotonic relationship between two variables is a relationship where as one variable goes up, the other variable goes up, or as one variable goes up, the other variable goes down). Spearman's Rho or correlation coefficient is a statistical measure of the strength of a monotonic relationship between paired data. For Dowie and Heath (1974), the aim of correlation was to tell us two things, firstly we could assess the magnitude of a relationship between two variables and if one measure increases so does the other. Secondly inverse relationships could also be identified meaning as one variable increases the other decreases. There was also the possibility that variables have no direct relationship. Spearman's Rho measures the strength of association or correlation between the two sets of data that can be measured. Sometimes, the data is not measurable but can only be ordered, as in ranking. Spearman's Rho can also be used to calculate the strength of association between rankings. The Spearman's Rho is actually a derivation of the correlation coefficient. It is denoted by the symbol  $r_s$  (or the Greek letter  $\rho$ , pronounced Rho) Therefore, the values of  $r_s$  must be between -1 and +1 [ $-1 < r_s < 1$ ], where:

$r_s = +1$  means that the rankings have perfect positive association. Their rankings are exactly alike.

$r_s = 0$  means that the rankings have no correlation or association.

$r_s = -1$  Means that the rankings have perfect negative association. They have exact reverse ranking to each other.

To establish if the Spearman's Rho is significant, the obtained value of  $r_s$  were compared with the values in the Spearman's rank table. This table was for testing the hypothesis that a population correlation coefficient,  $r$ , is zero. The values in the table are the minimum values of  $r$  from a sample that need to be reached for Spearman's Rho value to be significant at the level shown. (Crawshaw and Chambers, 2001). According to Downie and Heath (1974), this test is a widely used correlation method in research study. All tests were two-sided and a  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$  was considered to be statistically significant. The confidence level indicated the certainty of the margin of error. It expressed as a percentage and represented how often the true percentage of the population who would pick an answer lied within the margin of error. With a 95% confidence level, there was a 1 chance in 20 that we would get a false positive result. In this analysis, the significance level for the tests was set at 5%; however, where the significance of a statistical test was greater than 5% (for example, where it is 1%), this would be reported. The decision to use a 5% (as opposed to a 1% or 10% significance level) is arbitrary but as Cowles and Davis (1982) and Gall et al., (2007), reported, a 5% significance level is invariably used in studies of this kind, and across the social sciences.

The results from Fisher's Exact Test were presented firstly and only where the results of Spearman's Rho were different were both results reported. However, some of the variables were ordinal in nature, i.e. they had order associated with them (e.g. age group, number of years as a principal) and when analysing the order of the data the information if relevant was presented. The rationale for using both tests in this study was that Fisher's Exact Test does not take into account that the data has an order associated with it, while Spearman's Rho does. While Spearman's Rho also investigates if two variables are correlated, it can also be used when both of the variables have an order associated with them, while also measuring the strength of the association. Fisher's Exact Test ignores the order in the data and tests if there is any association (for example are males more likely

to answer "strongly agree", are females more likely to answer "neither agree nor disagree" etc.) However, it is less powerful (less likely to find a significant association) than Spearman's Rho. All statistical analysis were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 25.0, IBM Corp, Armonk, NY, U.S.A.). The results of the statistical analysis are presented in chapter 4.

#### **3.10.7.1 Coding using Nvivo**

Responses to the semi-structured interviews were collected and transcribed, representing 511 minutes of recorded data. They were subsequently imported into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program where the coding of thematic analysis was performed to look for emergent themes from the data. The act of coding requires a researcher's analytic lens, but how one perceives and interprets data depends on the type of filter used. Filters are influenced by the researchers own positionality and the coding method used. The study's findings were influenced by the constructs, concepts, models and theories that structured the study. Coding is a heuristic and exploratory problem solving technique and only reflects the initial step in analysing the data. It is a cyclical act requiring many cycles of coding in order to filter, highlight and focus the salient features of the data record, in order to generate categories themes and concepts and looking for meaning in the data. This involved codifying data in order to classify and categorise data, looking to generate meaning and explanation. Categories were thus generated from various codes, under headings, of categories and sub categories. Researchers need to be organised, exercise perseverance and need to be able to deal with ambiguity. In addition, they need to be able to, exercise flexibility, often having to code and recode, to be creative, be rigorously ethical and honest, and have an extensive vocabulary (Saldaña, 2013). This process was also influenced by the chosen behavioural framework (Bandura, 1978) that guided the study. Bandura (1978) suggested that personal, environmental and behaviour factors influence each other in a triad of reciprocity. Categories of coding were generated under each of these triadic influences thus helping to understand the impact of leadership coaching on each factor.

According to Saldaña (2013) if you are working with many participants in a study it may help to code one participant's data first then progress to the second. The researcher may find that the second data set will influence and affect the recording of the first participant's data and the consequent coding of the remaining participants. For the purposes of this study the researcher coded each interview transcript individually and independently, but conscious of codes that may be relevant to the framework that guided the study. Saldaña (2013, p. 15) suggested "code what rises to the surface" and "relevant text" which assisted the researcher in the approach to analysing the data. The actual number of codes categories and themes generated from research will vary and depend on many contextual factors. One's choice of coding method can impact this number and what filters one considers. If the researcher is reading and reviewing the data and formally coding them they can't help but notice a theme or number of themes within it (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher was aware of what Passmore and Gibbs, (2007) describes as to what is valued in coaching, which can be summarised under headings of communication skills, the ability to establish relationships, capacity for empathy, credibility, competence and knowledge of human behaviour. Having carried out cycle one of coding data applying codes to the transcripts, a second cycle of coding allowed the development of categories and sub-categories.

#### **3.10.7.2 Secondary coding through Nvivo (Second cycle)**

Qualitative research requires meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience, and as you work through your coding your work becomes more refined. This allows the researchers arrive at categories and sub categories and when these are re-compared and consolidated the researcher begins to transcend the reality of the data and progress towards the thematic conceptual and theoretical. This guided the researcher in initial coding of the data and helped prepare for the second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2013).

For Saldaña, (2013), second cycle methods of coding are a lot more challenging as "it requires such analytic skills as classifying, prioritising, integrating, synthesis, abstracting, conceptualising and theory binding" ensuring the first stage of the data coding has been

managed carefully, the second cycle of coding becomes easier. First cycle coding involves a range of coding methods but the chosen methods employed in this research included structural or holistic coding which involves a grand tour overview followed by in viva and values coding looking through transcripts as a method of attuning oneself to “participant language, perspectives and world views” Saldaña, (2013, p. 48).

Second cycle coding looks for patterns or focus. While there are many options available for second cycle coding often a researcher is influenced by their chosen framework or paradigm. The behaviour framework that guided this study influenced the researcher to look for clues that may impact behaviour, cognition or environment the three concepts of reciprocal determinism from the framework that guided the study. An important consideration is the coding harmonising the study’s framework and for this research emotion coding was an appropriate method, more so than other methods available and also related and addressed the research questions more effectively. Saldaña, (2013) advocates additional coding methods chosen after the first stage should help find the answers to research questions not create mysteries, they should also lend themselves to the coding method and assist an almost tidal pathway. He also suggests a pre-coding stage circling highlighting colouring holding rich or significant quotes or passages that strike the researcher which can become key pieces of evidence to support propositions assertions and theory. A summary of such passages and quotes are presented in the table 4.24.1.

Emotion coding labels the “emotions recalled and experienced by participants or inferred about the participant” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 86). Goleman (1995, p. 289) defines an emotion as a “feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states and range of propensities to act”. Emotions are a universal human experience and acknowledging this can provide deep insight into participants’ perspectives world views and life conditions. Since almost everything we do has an accompanying emotion it also precedes all actions that people take. In order for researchers to effectively use this method they need to be able to read non-verbal cues to be able to read underlying effects and to empathise with participants.

This research examined the language of emotion and while “there are hundreds of words to describe human emotion” (Saldaña, p. 87) the potential codes can be vast. A way to reduce this is for researchers is to look for processes where participants describe similar events. The researcher was able to identify emotional language used by participants through the second cycle of coding using emotional coding as a method. These emotions combined to generate a theme of reflective practice or cognition from Bandura’s (1978) framework. According to Saldaña, (2013), emotion coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for those that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions which is the premise of this study. A further outline of the process followed is provided in section 4.24.1 under Themes.

### **3.10. 8 Generating themes**

“A theme is an outcome of coding, categorisation and analytic reflection not something in itself that is coded” (Saldaña, 2013,p.13)

Using secondary coding of the data through Nvivo under the theme of language and emotional coding, further analysis identified language and patterns of words used by respondents through the interview data as a significant theme (Saldaña, 2013). In addition, key words from transcripts were used as codes (See Appendix 8). Research carried out by Wilson and Holligan (2013), also used emotional coding when examining performativity and its impact on work related emotions in UK universities in 2013, suggesting that affects and emotions help understand work life in leadership and management. As this research also aimed to understand emotions and leadership in an educational leadership context, it was also a suitable process to follow. In addition, Spence et al., (2019) when assessing the impact of coaching, used a qualitative study with structural analysis in coding narrative text to uncover meaning. Whilst they used Atlas.ti software, the approach was very similar to the approach taken in this study.

Hence emotional coding aims to label the emotions experienced by participants as emotions are often an important factor of decision making and behaviour. Decisions are guided by motivations to act, with motivations influenced by, and dependent upon, emotion, with lack of interest when there is little emotion, and where there is too much,



it leaves one's capacity to problem solve reduced (Bowman et al., 2013). Motivation is a precursor to action, so it is this propensity to act that is fundamental to successful leadership coaching, but in order for coaching to work, an emotion is experienced by participants firstly, and that is what drives them to action. According to Damasio (2009), understanding emotions allows for better decision making and prudent decision making is at the premise of coaching practice.

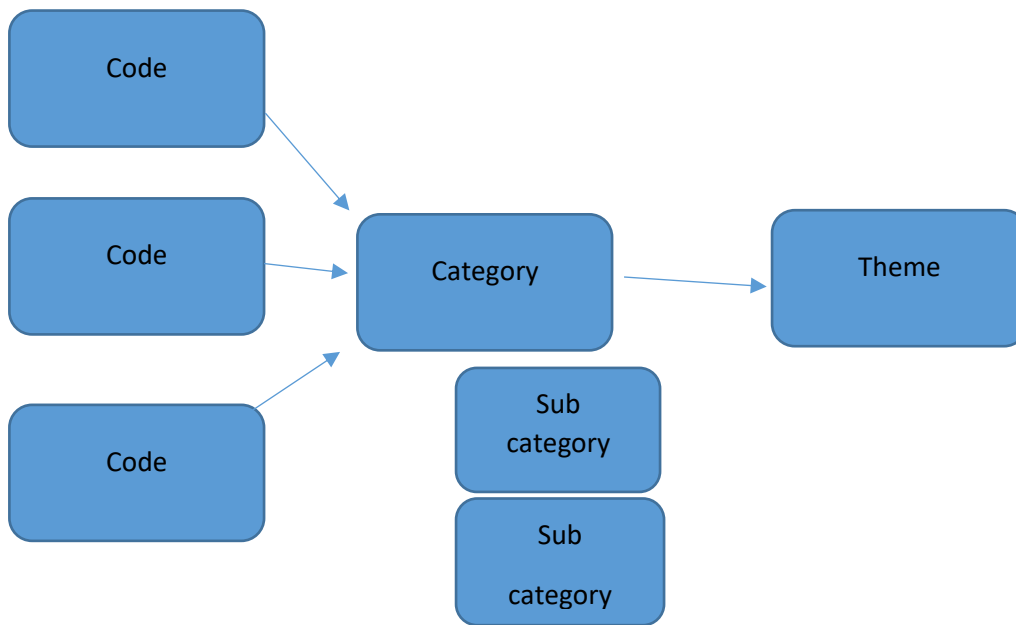
An alternative approach is to record preliminary jottings writing up field notes, preliminary words or phrases for codes on notes transcripts or documents for future reference. Questions to consider when you code were considered, such as: what are people doing? What strategies are they using? How do members talk about or characterise and understand what is going on? This step helped support the coding process further. Data gathered from this study analysing emotions is presented in table 3.10.8.1

I would have <b>thought</b>	I would see myself as	It makes you <b>stop and think</b>	<b>think about</b> what was it they really said
I would <b>think</b>	I am more conscious of	I <b>learned</b> to take notice of that	<b>Learning to</b> delay your response
I would need a sense of	I am really more conscious of	Slow down to notice	you're listening and questioning and probing
I am more aware of	It's actually understanding	I did a lot of <b>reflection</b> on that	I'm very aware of the fact,
You owning the responsibility	Take ownership of	Help people tease things out	I had a heightened awareness of
It gives you time to <b>consider</b>	I'm probably more empathetic	I would <b>think</b> more carefully about	Giving people the freedom to make their own decision
How am I behaving here	I believe	I <b>learned</b> I didn't ever think of that	
getting them to try and explore what, what could you possibly do here?		<b>Learning to</b> delay your response	new mindset for Irish education-distributed leadership

Table 3.10.8. 1 Emotional coding Nvivo analysis

*The colour coding in the table is guided by the framework of the study (Bandura, 1978) with red words signifying cognition activities (personal), the green signifying behavioural activities, and the orange signifying behavioural changes (learned), The blue refers to behaviour/environmental changes under categories of taking ownership and responsibility.*

Saldaña, (2013) advocated that themes should be derived when coding is complete and categories are established. This involved several initial steps of coding, followed by categorising and sub-categorising, and applying second rounds of coding such as emotional coding which was the approach used in this study, in order to develop themes. This process is outlined in the following diagram:



Coding stages (Saldaña (2013, p. 12).

Having concluded the cycles of coding through Nvivo software the following themes were generated:

- 1) Reflective Practice,
- 2) Distribution of Practice,
- 3) Building Leadership Capacity and
- 4) Enhanced Well-being

A summary of the process undertaken is provided in section 4.2.

### **3.11 Integrating the data and interviews**

In applying a mixed methods approach to research it is important to integrate the data on completion of the surveys and interviews. The same theoretical approach was used for both data collection sources, with the semi structured interviews following on from the work of the survey. The subsequent convergent findings, where the researcher was attempting to use the dual methods to address the research question, were analysed and will be presented in the next chapter.

### **3.12 Timeline**

The survey was distributed in early March 2019. A follow up email was sent in late March/early April 2019 before the final survey channels were exhausted. Interviews took place once participants had completed the surveys and these took place from late March 2019 to the end of June 2019, depending on locality/availability of the participant.

### **3.13 Limitations**

This was a new research area in the Irish context and the amount of potential participants was limited to those that had completed a Diploma in leadership coaching with an associated level 6 QQI award (n=54). As this research was confined to a specific cohort of school principals/leaders, it did not represent the view of all school principals on leadership coaching. A rationale for this approach has been provided with the study focus on principals who have trained as coaches. Despite this limitation the researcher was satisfied that all avenues were explored in order to collect the data and increase the survey size. Access to participants was not a concern in this case, as Director of an Education Centre, the researcher had access to all the main bodies in education and coaching training and knew the key personnel in all of these organisations on a personal level. This allowed the survey to be sufficiently distributed, followed up on email and telephone, with many parties/government bodies supporting the research.

No research is perfect and it can be quite complex and although researchers don't often approach their project in a perfect linear path, it is still important that the research paradigm is clear (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The researcher through a mixed methods

approach aimed to gather as much data as possible on the subject. Thus, although mixed methods may not be the chosen path by some, by applying a mixed methods approach this can only “enrich and strengthen educational research”, as long as it is examined through a critical lens (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p.8). The mixed methods approach has endeavoured to probe deeper into the data that was collected.

### **3.14 Ethical approval and considerations**

There are many issues to consider when considering ethics in research. It is certainly true that any research project involves many potential ethical issues. Researchers need to reflect on how they are approaching their study and ask the question is this ethical? Care and attention needs to be given to participants to ensure that what is required of them is legitimate, what the impact of the findings on those participants may be and to the potential findings that may arise during the course of the gathering of data. This includes how the researcher may respond to unexpected scenarios and how the researcher would respond to witnessing unethical standards as part of the research process (Hammersley and Traianou, (2012).

Five ethical principles have guided the conduct of this research. These include 1) Minimising harm – the possibilities of which are low in this research, 2) Respecting autonomy - participation is voluntary, 3) Protecting privacy - this has been discussed and explained to all participants, 4) Offering reciprocity - no payment has been made or received, and 5) Treating people equitably - this researcher has aimed to do this (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012), (See appendix 1).

These ethical considerations were considered in this current study. The study did not involve working with children, and adults that agreed to take part in the research had the option to opt out at any time. An email was issued to participants beforehand outlining the precise nature of the study, confirming ethical approval, and highlighting the precautions around data protection and anonymity. In addition, when participants agreed to be interviewed, a letter of consent was devised prior to the interview and participants signed a copy before starting the interview. A paragraph was read to the participants and

informed consent was received. Only then was a recording device turned on (See Appendix 1).

This research involved a survey distributed electronically to primary school principals through the IPPN, CSL, coaching colleges, ATECI and social media. This survey was completed by primary/post primary school principals and aimed to capture data around their role as educational leaders. The survey was optional and there were no consequences for those principals who wish to take part. The survey was anonymous and principals were invited to share their details, if they were willing to be subsequently interviewed. When the data were being analysed, pseudonyms were issued to participants and school names were not included. Every effort was made to approach the study in an open manner in a spirit of integrity.

Although the researcher, in his role as Director of an Education Centre in County Mayo, had access to principals, both locally and through the network of centres nationally, he had no accountability function over those being asked to complete the survey. Participants could withdraw from the survey at any time without consequences. Data will be stored in Google Drive, a cloud-based storage facility, with a two-step verification password protection, with the data held for five years following the completion of this Doctorate, after which it will then be deleted. In addition, an application for ethical approval was submitted to the Ethics Board of Lincoln University. This was approved in July 2018, enabling the survey to be conducted in compliance with the university policy (see appendix 5).

### **3.15 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the steps taken in this research study to gather quantitative and qualitative data. A mixed methods approach allowed an initial survey to be distributed to identified participants who fit the criteria on perceptions of the impact of leadership coaching on the role of principal. This was subsequently followed up with semi structured interviews, where participants agreed to be interviewed. The survey collected the views of principals in the Irish context in relation to leadership coaching, with the interviews

allowing for a deeper study of their views. This allowed the researcher to experience at a deeper level information that may not be evident through a survey alone and which, through extended conversation, brought new themes not collected in the literature. The data analysis is presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Findings

“...there’s always plan B. It’s just you have to find plan B”

(Amanda)

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter data findings from the data collection are presented, with subsequent themes that emerged from the data analysis being presented later in the chapter. There were two data gathering parts to this research, a quantitative survey, and follow up semi-structured interviews. According to Denscombe (2010), both approaches have something in common, as both are aiming to answer the researcher’s questions, with the interviews being a type of self-report. While the survey aimed to gather statistical data, the interviews involved a deeper examination of data, and while being different from a conversation, participants recognize that this information becomes part of that research data. An important part of this aspect of the data gathering was having interview skills, such as being sensitive to the interviewee, using prompts and allowing silences, probing where appropriate, and using checks as appropriate (Denscombe, 2010). According to Denscombe (2010), a key benefit of qualitative research is that it is grounded extensively in fieldwork with often a long time spent in the environment being researched. This provides “a solid foundation based on the data and adds to the credibility of the research” (p.327). The researcher carried out many of the semi structured interviews in schools, visited teachers who had completed the Diploma in coaching training programme and met with groups of teachers undertaking the coaching course throughout the nine-month duration. The researcher endeavoured to pursue credibility and good research practice by conducting interviews with principals and deputy principals that have different backgrounds and school contexts.

Cohen et al., (2002, p.184), suggested that researchers should “assemble chunks or groups of data” and thereafter collate it together to make a “more coherent whole” representing all the data collected. They suggest writing summaries of what has been



gathered and comparing and contrasting notes to arrive at some order. The methodical approach to interpreting the dense and complex data was to analyse the quantitative data using SPSS, with further thematic analysis being undertaken with the qualitative data using Nvivo software. The aim of this process was to reduce the data to a coherent number of key concepts or themes. A number of categories emerged from the data, with secondary coding through Nvivo narrowing the categories down to a smaller manageable number of themes. A summary of the data collected is provided later in the chapter.

#### **4.2 Analyzing the data**

Burns (1997), suggested that research is a systematic investigation where data is collected and analysed. While there are two sources/methods of data collection in this research, Kelle and Erzberger (2004), outlined that while there is often the temptation to locate qualitative and quantitative methods in two different methodological paradigms, and thus draw attention to their different philosophical roots, they also suggest there is an argument to integrate the two approaches. Methods themselves are rarely combined but are often carried out in parallel, with outcomes related to each other on completion. General models of integration of methods are mostly developed at the abstract methodological level, and that the relationship between both methods are understood under three possible outcomes. Kelle and Erzberger (2004) suggested these three possible outcomes as:

- 1) Convergence – the approaches agree
- 2) Complementary – the are reciprocal and supplement each other but qualitative may allow more in depth or deeper understanding not easily accessed by quantitative only
- 3) Divergence – they contradict each other and this may motivate the revision of initial theoretical assumptions

(Kelle and Erzberger, 2004, p.174)

In addition, in social research the term triangulation is often used to refer to the use of observations of the research from the two different points (Flick et al., 2004) which can inform the findings of the data collected.

This chapter presents the results and findings following analysis of the data collected. The presentation of the data is associated with the two main research questions.

- How does leadership coaching psychology impact the role of school principal/leader?
- How does it impact on principal/leader well-being?

The data gathered was considered by using Dewitt's (2018) framework and Banduras' (1978) model of reciprocal determinism where behavioural, personal and environmental factors influence perceptions (as discussed in the methodology chapter).

For Denscombe, (2010, p. 263), there were 5 important stages of data analysis.

- 1) Data preparation – includes coding, cataloguing and loading into software
- 2) Initial exploration – looking for trends and correlations and recurrent themes
- 3) Analysis of the data – using statistical tests such as descriptive statistics, factor analysis, cluster analysis and coding by theme
- 4) Presentation and display of the data in tables, figures with written interpretation of the findings to include quotes
- 5) Validation of the data – external benchmarks, internal consistency, comparison of explanations and data triangulation.

Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clarke (2011, p. 129).

These five stages were used to analyse the data gathered. The first phase of the research consisted of a survey distributed to all primary schools in Ireland and sought to examine the impact of leadership coaching psychology on those principals that had completed the minimum Diploma training. This was subsequently followed up with interviews (n=12), to explore the data at a deeper level. Data from the surveys was analysed using SPSS. Rich data from the interviews was grouped into similar categories to obtain meaning which

was subsequently compared and contrasted to find both similarities and differences in participant responses. A number of themes emerged from the interrelated categories of both the quantitative and qualitative data. The results of this data are presented in a systematic format to correspond with the identified themes.

#### 4.2.1 Presentation of results

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics and responses of the principals in the study. Categorical data were described numerically using frequency and percentage (%) and graphically using bar charts. Percentage figures in tables may not sum to 100, owing to rounding. All statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 25.0, IBM Corp, Armonk, NY, StataCorp U.S.A.). Nvivo was used to code and interpret the qualitative data and contributed to the emergence of the identified themes. The next sections outline the findings from the quantitative survey mixed with data from the interviews process, in order to triangulate the findings and themes. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to assist with the identification of gender preferences as follows

Participant 1= Mary	Participant 2 = John	Participant 3 = Michelle	Participant 4 = Amanda
Participant 5 = Edel	Participant 6 = Imelda	Participant 7 = Fred	Participant 8 = Amanda
Participant 9 = Liam	Participant 10 = Betty	Participant 11 = Fidelma	Participant 12 = Dolores

#### 4.3 Characteristics of respondents

A total of 48 principals/deputy principals responded to the questionnaire and their characteristics are described in Table 4.3.1. The majority of respondents were aged 45-64 years (n=34, 71%) and had been a school principal for 10 or more years (n=27, 60%). Almost three-quarters worked in an urban school (n=35, 73%) and primary administrative was the most common role of respondents (n=19, 40%). As urban schools have bigger

staff numbers, an explanation for this could be that coaching as a leadership tool would be more attractive to such principals, enabling them to manage a large team more effectively. Over half (n=25, 52%) worked in a non-Deis (delivering equality of opportunity in schools, the action plan for educational inclusion which was launched in May 2005 and remains the DES policy instrument to address educational disadvantage) school with the remaining working in a Deis school (n=17), a Gaelscoil (schools that are Irish medium with all subjects except English being taught through Irish), (n=1) and other types of schools (n=5). The highest educational qualifications were B.Ed (n=10), Primary Degree and Postgraduate Diploma in Education (n=12), Postgraduate Diploma (n=5), M.Ed (n=16), MBA (n=1) and PhD/Ed.D (n=3). Three quarters of respondents (n=36, 75%) have a Diploma in Coaching, with the balance of respondents having either a Masters/Bsc/BA or equivalent coaching qualification and experience in the sector. These may be listed under MA, MSc., BA counselling, Bsc /Diploma in Educational mentoring or Diplomas in counselling, (see appendix 3).

**Table 4.3.1 Characteristics of respondents, n=48**

	n (%) <sup>*</sup>
Age (n=48)	
25-34	3 (6)
35-44	9 (19)
45-54	19 (39)
55-64	16 (34)
65+	1 (2)
Gender	
Male	19 (40)
Female	29 (60)
Role	
Primary Administrative	19 (40)
Primary Teaching	7 (15)
Post-Primary Principal	6 (13)
Deputy Principal (Primary/Post Primary)	3 (6)
AP1/AP2	5 (10)
Other	8 (17)
School type	
Urban	35 (73)
Rural	13 (27)
School classification	
Non Deis	25 (52)
Deis	17 (35)
Gaelscoil	1 (2)
Other	5 (10)
Number of years as a school principal (n=48)	
0-5	8 (18)
5-10	10 (21)
10-15	15 (31)
15+	15 (31)
Highest educational qualification (n=48)	
B.Ed	10 (21)
Primary Degree and Postgraduate Diploma in Education	13 (27)
Postgraduate diploma	5 (10)
M.Ed	16 (34)
MBA	1 (2)
PhD/Ed. D	3 (6)
Diploma in Coaching	
Yes	36 (75)
No	12 (25)

<sup>\*</sup>unless otherwise stated

Table 4.3. 1 Characteristics of respondents

### 4.3.1 Investigation of factors associated with doing a Diploma in Coaching

The variables gender, age, number of years as a principal, whether or not the respondent had a postgraduate qualification and whether they worked in a Deis school split by whether or not the respondent had a Diploma in Coaching are presented in Table 4.3.1.1. No significant relationships were found. Thus men were no more likely to have a Diploma in coaching than women. Equally age, school type and length of service were not factors that impacted.

Table 4.3.1. 1 Factors associated with a Diploma in Coaching

	Diploma in Coaching		p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Yes	No	
	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender			1
Male (n=19)	(73.7) 14	(26.3) 5	
Female (n=29)	(75.9) 22	(24.1) 7	
Age			0.352
25-44 years (n=12)	(75.0) 9	(25.0) 3	
45-54 years (n=18)	(66.7) 12	(33.3) 6	
55+ years (n=17)	(88.2) 15	(11.8) 2	
Number of years as a school principal			0.664
0-5 (n=8)	(87.5) 7	(12.5) 1	
5-10 (n=10)	(60.0) 6	(40.0) 4	
10-15 (n=12)	(75.0) 9	(25.0) 3	
15+ (n=15)	(73.3) 11	(26.7) 4	
Postgraduate classification			0.096
No (n=10)	(50.0) 5	(50.0) 5	
Yes (n=37)	(81.1) 30	(18.9) 7	
Deis school			1
No (n=31)	(74.2) 23	(25.8) 8	
Yes (n=17)	(76.5) 13	(23.5) 4	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

*Mary is a primary school principal of a medium-size school in a small town in the West of Ireland. She manages a team of about 14 people and is an administrative Principal. Mary thinks that the most important responsibility of school leadership is actually teaching and learning. For her that doesn't mean you have to necessarily be absolutely right at the interface all the time, but as a leader the child has to be central to everything that you do. If you know the progression of the child is central to everything you do 'I don't think you will go too far wrong.'*

*For Mary she highlighted that staff relationships are very important in leadership, something that leadership coaching assists her with. Her motivations for taking up coaching were more personal than professional. Mary saw coaching as something that can help with student achievement suggesting that coaching allowed you to get students to actually consider where they are at and allow them to take ownership for their own behaviours and that this facilitated a change of behaviour where they took responsibility for their own actions rather than being told by the teacher or principal.*

*For Mary there were two things that coaching really helped her with. It added to her skill set the ability to listen effectively and listen and respond with appropriate questioning in order to get the teacher to think about their own situation.*

*Mary cited challenges in creating a culture around coaching suggesting that at the moment coaching remains a little informal. It also is relatively unknown in the education system. Mary wondered were some staff not coachable and with some it would be viewed as self-confrontational? Another concern for Mary was that if you're a leader of a school and you're having a coaching dialogue with people, how does this role clash with your responsibility as school leader where are you may have to do something in the school that your coachee*

*doesn't like? You can find yourself in a position where they're saying that the coaching dialogue they had with you as a coach is different than what you did in the staffroom or a decision you made that day. She cites the demarcation line as an issue between Mary as principal which specific tasks to do and perhaps managing behaviour that is unacceptable then subsequently trying to coach this teacher in a different relationship. She saw as a very grey area.*

*However, Mary suggested that coaching impacted very positively on her well-being in the sense that she had in the past felt responsible for everything saying I was known as Miss will fix it. Coaching allowed Mary to find the gap to actually say no! 'I am as much a leader as you are and there is no doubt you are responsible, but you are not responsible to fix everything; but you are responsible to know it gets fixed'. Mary suggested that this gap is about encouraging people to take more responsibility for what is there and then taking responsibility for that versus what is your responsibility and be able to bridge the gap and to differentiate between those two. This allowed Mary to have an enhanced feeling of well-being as she did not feel guilty about saying no. Mary suggested that there is a need for the Department of Education and Skills to come to the realisation that staff well-being is an essential precursor to ensuring student well-being stating you cannot have one without the other.*

*Another aspect for Mary was that in the past she always reacted to everyone in her life from children, spouse and work colleagues, but is now able to step back from things and not let this bother her as much anymore. This helped Mary in her role particularly.*



#### **4.4 Opinions on the importance of responsibilities of a school leader**

In setting the background to this research it is important to examine the role of the school principal in education in Ireland. Much literature points to the wide ranging role of the school principal, with many references to the vital role the principal plays in the leading of teaching and learning in school but that business models of leadership are occupying a more significant amount of professional time in recent years (Smith and Riley, 2016; Machin, 2014). The results of this study showed that leading teaching and learning is considered the most important responsibility of a school leader with 92% of respondents (n=44) considering it to be a very important responsibility (see Figure 6). The remaining respondents considered it to be important (n=8). Another very important responsibility of the school principal was teaching (n=32, 68%) (56% of respondents have full time teaching duties therefore teaching would be an important role).

From the interview data, Mary states;

“I do think that the most important responsibility in leadership is actually the teaching and learning; now I don’t believe that means that you necessarily have to be absolutely right at the interface all the time. But I think as a leader that has to be that the child is central to everything that you do .....if you know the progression of the child is central to everything you do I don’t think you will go too far wrong.”

The needs of the child were also corroborated by John who puts the needs of the children first, with the holistic development of all children in the school a second priority stating;

“my third priority would be around the quality of actual teaching and learning in the school.”

The next most important responsibility was managing and coaching staff with 90% (n=43) considering it to be very important and 10% (n=5) considering it to be important. Joyce and Showers, (2002) also point to coaching as having one of the biggest impacts on

practice for teaching, with coaching being a core role of school leadership development (Lovely, 2004; Chander et al., 2011; Aguilar, 2013; Chase, 2018; Gross 2018).

Several participants from the interviews concurred that coaching staff is an important school leadership role. Mary highlighted the staff relationships that are important in leadership with Edel highlighting the “climate of care” being an important component of school leadership. Imelda suggests that responsibilities of a school leader should include “the leadership of staff, .....empowering your staff, enabling the staff to be the best teachers they can possibly be,” while Liam also agreed and highlights “motivating, inspiring staff” with many participants acknowledging the relationship aspect of leadership as being essential to school leadership.

The majority of respondents also considered motivating pupils as important (n=37, 77%) (Walsh, 2013 cites 22.4% of time related to students). Interview data also valued time spent on student motivation with it being a most important role. For Amanda, “we are responsible for the well-being of our children,” with Michelle corroborating this view stating “....the needs of the children will be always first you know.”

Almost half of respondents also considered managing resources and liaising with stakeholders to be very important responsibilities (n=22, 46% for both). While other responsibilities were noted by participants, such as managing finance, planning for school events, school planning and administration, (the numbers being less than 5 on each scale) this demonstrated that these were not seen as significant important responsibilities of a school leader, a fact also noted by Walsh (2013) in analysing time spent on activities in post-primary schools. Even though they were not seen as significant important responsibilities, they were still duties that still have to be completed and occupied a significant amount of time. However, as they did not contribute to developing teaching and learning, they are deemed to be less important. Only a small number of respondents noted the well-being of students and staff as being an important responsibility (n=5). While this contradicted interview data, this could be interpreted that some staff feel responsible themselves for their own health and well-being, unwilling to make it the

responsibility of school leaders only. A summary of these findings is represented in figure 6.

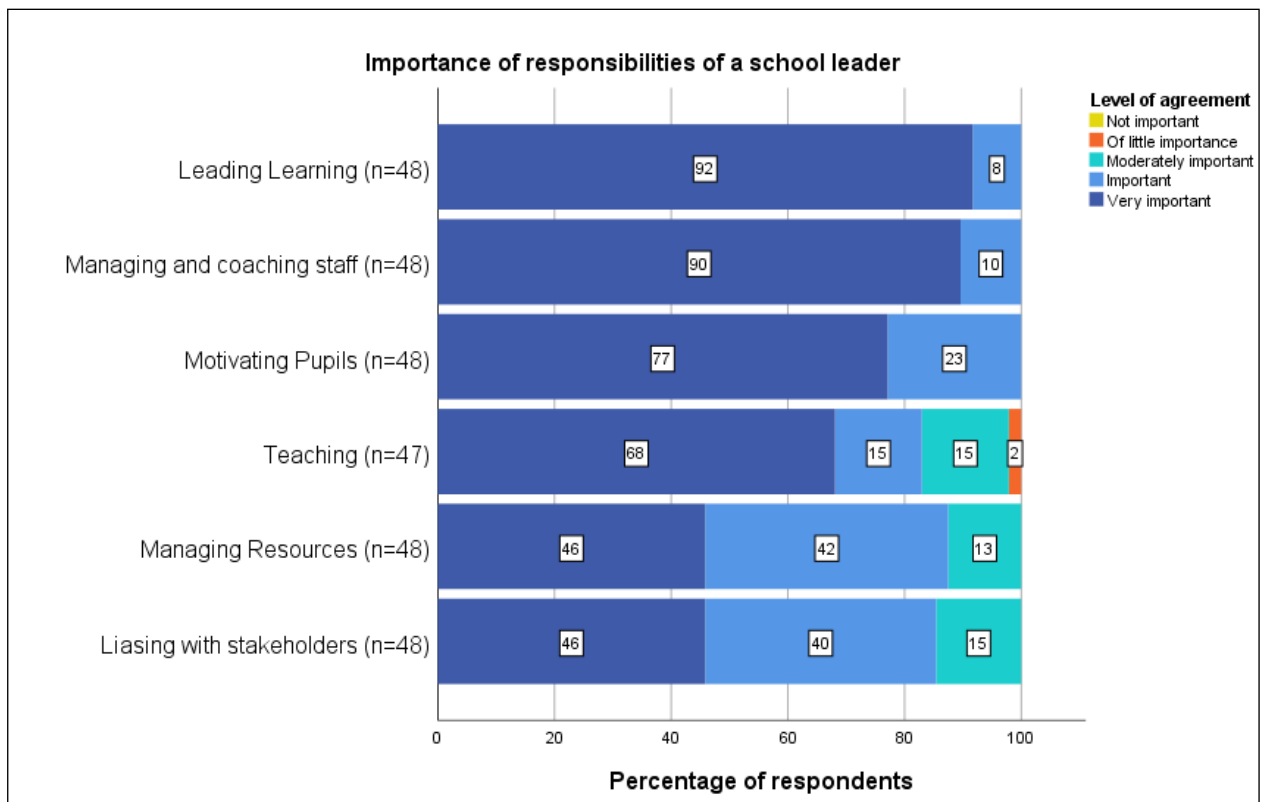


Figure 6 Importance of responsibilities

#### 4.5 Major reasons for deciding to take a formal qualification in coaching

*Fred is a primary school principal of a small school in a rural area in the West of Ireland. Fred undertook a Diploma in Coaching for both personal and professional reasons. Having just taken up a leadership role, he believed that leadership coaching would be a useful skill for a principal. One of the skills Fred developed through leadership coaching training was not to tell or advise others he managed what to do; but instead that a new change of ‘mindset’ would ‘expand peoples’ capacity and confidence in acting for themselves.’*

*Acknowledging the burden of workload of a school Principal, Fred highlighted the importance for leaders to 'empower,' others as this 'enables' them. It takes the 'burden off the Principal's shoulders' and helps them (teachers) solve their own problems. He called this a distributed leadership mindset.*

*In evaluating the benefits of leadership coaching and well-being Fred suggested that 'the coaching course has improved all areas of my life because you can't look at any area in isolation.' Fred also recommended coaching training to help with being assertive and dealing with 'limiting and ill-informed beliefs.' He also was able to address some life changing decisions such as bullying and life-work balance.*

*Citing the importance of reframing, coaching gave him the ability to 'reframe all problems in both his personal and professional life.'*

Participants of this research all undertook a formal training programme in leadership coaching. The reasons for taking a formal qualification in coaching are described in Figure 7. Personal development was considered the most important reason with 85% of respondents (n=41) considering it to be a very important reason. The remaining respondents considered it to be important (n=6) and moderately important (n=1).

“it was a personal thing that actually got me to do the coaching, ..... “

(Mary)

This was confirmed also by Imelda who stated:

“A lot of your time you were that type of coach person for them, so I felt to give myself the qualifications to feel that I was doing it better would empower me to be a better principal and then help me with my staff for their well-being”.

While Mary and 6 cited personal development reasons for taking the course Amanda stated they did the course for both personal and professional reasons.

Betty had a divergent view stating:

“I like to spend time talking to people....., I found people were coming to me, I found my staff were coming to me, my students were coming to me and I suppose I had a natural ability to talk to people and people seemed to find it comfortable to talk to me so I thought do you know what; there’s a lot.. of these conversations happening and it would be no harm to get some training. So that was really where I was coming from”

The next most important reason for undertaking a coaching qualification was to develop their skills as a leader with 90% (n=45) of respondents considering it to be at least moderately important. Promotional prospects and post-retirement planning were considered less important by the respondents with 59% and 46%, respectively considering those reasons to be at least moderately important. While 18 other reasons were cited by participants, they were insignificant in number and frequency. For Fred, he had just taken up a principal role and believed coaching skills would be useful while Amanda had career aspirations to a leadership role.

“I suppose part of it was maybe thinking that I would go for a leadership role. And I thought maybe it would be beneficial”.

(Amanda)

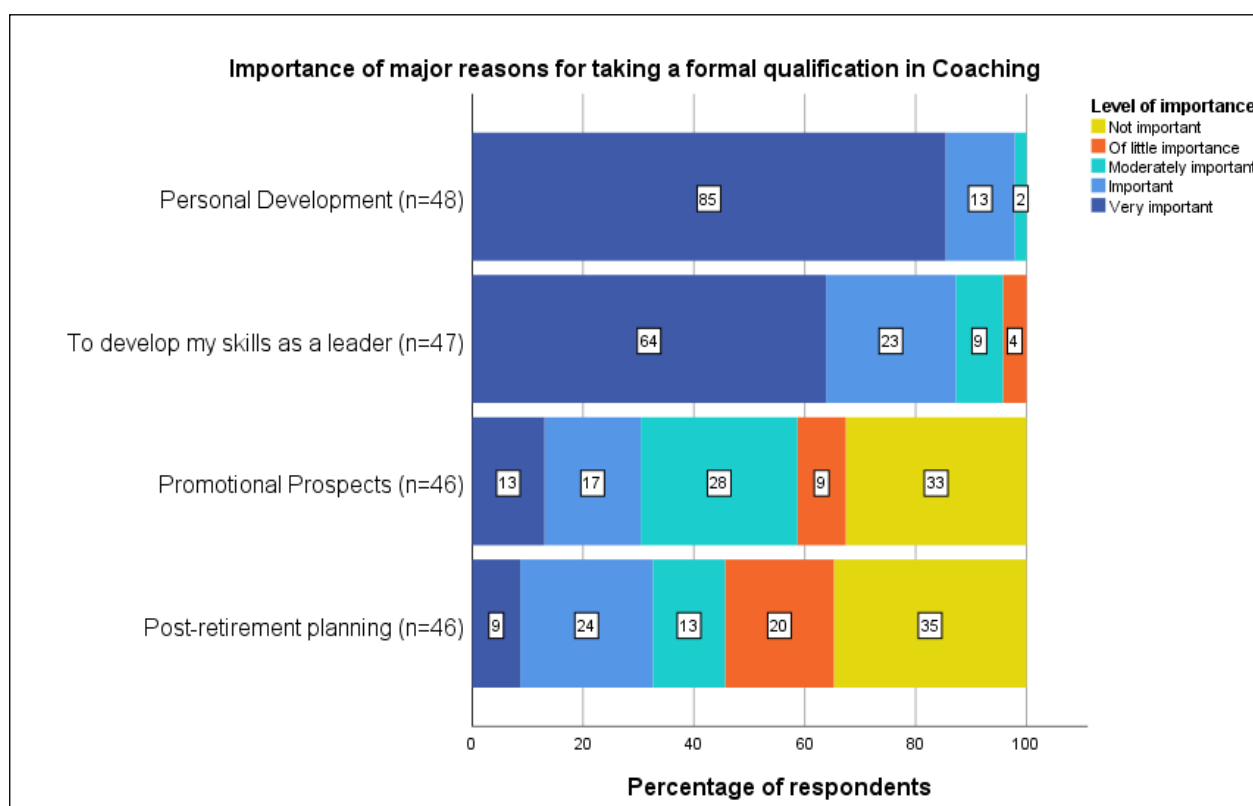


Figure 7 Importance of major reasons for taking a formal qualification in coaching.

#### 4.5.1 Personal Development

Looking further at personal development as a motivator for doing the course, responses to the question split by gender and age are presented in Table 4.5.1. A relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.002$ ) at the 5% level, was found between gender and the level of importance of personal development as a reason for taking a formal qualification in coaching, with female respondents being more likely to consider personal development to be “very important”. Age was not significantly associated with responses to the statement.

Table 4.5. 1 Personal development &amp; coaching

	Importance of <b>Personal development</b> as a reason for taking a formal qualification in Coaching			p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender				0.002
Male (n=19)	☑ (68.4) 13	☑ (31.6) 6	(0.0) 0	
Female (n=29)	☑ (96.6) 28	(0.0) 0	☑ (3.4) 1	
Age				0.950
25-44 years (n=12)	☑ (83.3) 10	☑ (16.7) 2	(0.0) 0	
45-54 years (n=18)	☑ (88.9) 16	☑ (11.1) 2	(0.0) 0	
55+ years (n=17)	☑ (82.4) 14	☑ (11.8) 2	☑ (5.9) 1	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

#### 4.5.2 Developing skills as a leader

Further analysis in developing skills as a leader as a motivator for taking the course, responses to the question split by gender and age are presented in Table 4.5.2. Gender and age were not significantly associated with responses to the statement.

Table 4.5. 2 Skills development &amp; coaching

	Importance of <b>Developing Skills as a leader</b> as a reason for taking a formal qualification in Coaching				p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of little importance	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender					0.251
Male (n=19)	☑ (57.9) 11	☑ (36.8) 7	☑ (5.3) 1	(0.0) 0	
Female (n=28)	☑ (67.9) 19	☑ (14.3) 4	☑ (10.7) 3	☑ (7.1) 2	
Age					0.346
25-44 years (n=12)	☑ (50.0) 6	☑ (41.7) 5	☑ (8.3) 1	(0.0) 0	
45-54 years (n=18)	☑ (61.1) 11	☑ (27.8) 5	☑ (5.6) 1	☑ (5.6) 1	
55+ years (n=16)	☑ (75.0) 12	☑ (6.3) 1	☑ (12.5) 2	☑ (6.3) 1	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

### 4.5.3 Promotional prospects

Responses to the question split by gender and age are presented in Table 4.5.3. A relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.048$ ) at the 5% level, was found between age and the level of importance of promotional prospects as a reason for taking a formal qualification in coaching with older respondents considering promotional prospects to be less important. Gender was not significantly associated with responses to the statement. This is not surprising as older participants are likely to be at principal level at this stage of their career with no real further opportunity for promotion in their school.

Table 4.5. 3 Promotional prospects and coaching motivation

	Importance of <b>Promotional Prospects</b> as a reason for taking a formal qualification in Coaching					p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of little Importance	Not Important	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender						0.072
Male (n=19)	✓ (15.8) 3	✓ (21.1) 4	✓ (36.8) 7	✓ (15.8) 3	✓ (10.5) 2	
Female (n=27)	✓ (11.1) 3	✓ (14.8) 4	✓ (22.2) 6	✓ (3.7) 1	✓ (48.1) 13	
Age						0.048
25-44 years (n=12)	✓ (33.3) 4	✓ (8.3) 1	✓ (33.3) 4	✓ (8.3) 1	✓ (16.7) 2	
45-54 years (n=17)	(0.0) 0	✓ (29.4) 5	✓ (41.2) 7	(0.0) 0	✓ (29.4) 5	
55+ years (n=16)	✓ (12.5) 2	✓ (12.5) 2	✓ (12.5) 2	✓ (18.8) 3	✓ (43.8) 7	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

### 4.5.4 Post-retirement planning

Responses to the question split by gender and age are presented in Table 4.5.4. A relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.049$ ) at the 5% level, was found between age and the level of importance of post-retirement planning as a reason for taking a formal qualification in coaching with older respondents considering post-retirement planning to be more important. Gender was not significantly associated with



responses to the statement. This is not surprising as this would suggest principals may be considering coaching as a part time career in retirement.

Table 4.5. 4 Post retirement planning & coaching motivations

	Importance of <b>Post-retirement planning</b> as a reason for taking a formal qualification in Coaching					p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of little Importance	Not Important	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender						0.472
Male (n=19)	✓ (15.8) 3	✓ (15.8) 3	✓ (10.5) 2	✓ (26.3) 5	✓ (31.6) 6	
Female (n=27)	✓ (3.7) 1	✓ (29.6) 8	✓ (14.8) 4	✓ (14.8) 4	✓ (37.0) 10	
Age						0.049
25-44 years (n=11)	✓ (9.1) 1	(0.0) 0	✓ (9.1) 1	✓ (9.1) 1	✓ (72.7) 8	
45-54 years (n=18)	✓ (5.6) 1	✓ (22.2) 4	✓ (22.2) 4	✓ (16.7) 3	✓ (33.3) 6	
55+ years (n=16)	✓ (12.5) 2	✓ (37.5) 6	✓ (6.3) 1	✓ (31.3) 5	✓ (12.5) 2	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

#### 4.6 Course fees

Less than half of the respondents (n=20, 42%) received funding for their fees from any source (Table 4.6.1). Of those, 14 received full funding (sponsored by employer) and 6 received partial funding (bursar award/partial employer grant). Funding is not normally available for courses, but applicants can make an application to their management board while others may apply for a grant award from the DES of which a very small number are successful. In the majority of cases funding is not approved as boards of management do not have funds for education courses. In a small number of cases a business need that is identified may be funded by the employer, which represents the 14 participants who received full funding. Of the 28 respondents who did not receive any funding, 15 stated that the course fees were an obstacle to them taking the course but they proceeded regardless, 12 stated that it wasn't an obstacle and the remaining respondent stated that they got a discount due to a previous study so they were happy to proceed. Word of mouth was the most common source of hearing about the course (n=13, 27%), followed

by email from the provider (n=11, 23%), a flyer (n=5, 10%) and staff notice board (n=2, 4%). Seventeen respondents gave other sources of hearing about the course which included: 2 searching the internet, 9 hearing about the course from their local Education Centre and the remaining 6 being influenced by working with a coach/organisation involved in coaching outside of school.

Table 4.6. 1 Funding of fees

N=48

	n (%) <sup>*</sup>
Received funding for your fees	
Yes - full funding	14 (29)
Yes - partial funding	6 (13)
No	28 (58)
Were course fees an obstacle to taking the course? (n=28) <sup>**</sup>	
Yes - but I proceeded regardless	15
No - I wanted to do the course regardless	12
I got a discount due to a previous study so was happy to proceed	1
Where heard about course	
Word of mouth	13 (27)
Email from provider	11 (23)
Flyer	5 (10)
Staff notice board	2 (4)
Other (please specify in the box below)	17 (35)

<sup>\*</sup>unless otherwise stated

<sup>\*\*</sup>based on respondents who did not receive funding for the course

## 4.7 Impact of coaching skills

The following section deals with aspects of the core research question; Does coaching impact educational leadership? It also considered student achievement. Respondents' level of agreement with statements about the contribution of coaching skills to their effectiveness with staff and pupils and student achievement are described in Figure 8. The contribution of coaching skills to respondents' effectiveness with staff had the strongest agreement (71% strongly agreed) followed by the contribution of coaching skills to respondents' effectiveness with pupils (63% strongly agreed). Weaker agreement was

found for the contribution of coaching skills to student achievement with 19% (n=9) strongly agreeing and 44% agreeing (n=21).

In analysing the interview data, participants referenced their skills as leaders of staff and that they could now draw on new skills since taking up coaching training. One of the more dominant themes emerging from leadership coaching was a change in behaviour by leaders with the ability to draw out from others, answers and solutions to their own problems. Peltier (2010, p.72) referred to this as the “existential way” of living and the idea that coaches have the answers within. This distributed model of leadership from within is being promoted by leadership theorists around the world. Amanda stated:

“I would certainly not be telling anybody what I think anymore. I would really tease it out of them and try and get them, no more than the situation I spoke about. You know it has to come from the person”.

This change in behaviour was echoed by Ed

“.....the awfulness of the teacher always having to have the ready answer and the advice and being able to curb that in myself .....most teachers have a tendency to provide answers....I learned to take notice of that.”

Imelda corroborated this finding also experiencing the power in coaching others:

“I worked as a coach with a person who, through conversation and through doing the different models..... using the different tools, she came to the conclusion about a big thing in her life and it was lovely to see, because it empowered her to be happy in her decision and that, that was a very, for me, a very, you know, it was a very moving moment for me because she kind of, she was thankful for me but I was saying it wasn't me, it was you, you know, you made the decision, you knew it all along, but just this conversation and this tool helped you realise it, you know”.

Fred also recognised this new distribution of practice stating:

“I've learned not to advise unless necessary, really necessary. It's a whole new mind-set, really it is..... you know coaching sessions are about expanding

people’s capacity and confidence in acting for themselves. Which ultimately takes a lot off the principal’s shoulders, because people will know how to solve their own problems basically. Growing leaders to develop their leadership skills, empower them, it enables them. Helps them to take responsibility which is all about the new mind-set for Irish education at the moment, distributing leadership.”

A similar experience was echoed by Betty who also stated the benefits of leadership coaching:

“I had a heightened awareness of the kind of dialogues I was having and I suppose of giving people the freedom to make their own decisions and to set goals”.

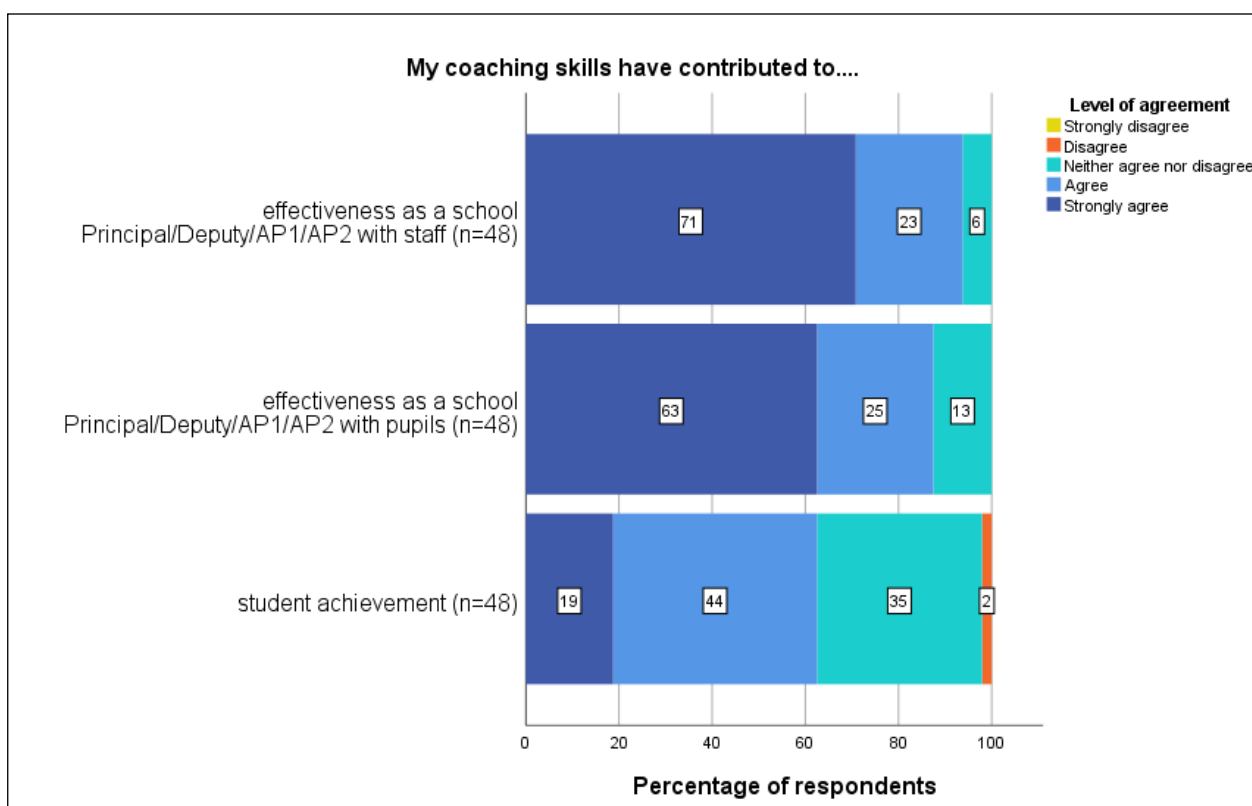


Figure 8 Contribution of coaching skills.

#### **4.7.1 Student achievement**

Beere and Broughton, (2013) and Bossi (2008) saw coaching as a pedagogy that can have a huge impact on student achievement. This was supported in the research with 63% of participants in the survey strongly agreeing or agreeing that leadership skills made a difference with student achievement (see Figure 8). Students demonstrated increased responsibility for themselves and their learning when coached:

“To actually consider where are they at and take ownership for their own behaviours and I found that worked you know when they took responsibility; that was what brought them somewhere rather than us telling them.” (Mary)

Michelle also acknowledged the importance of coaching skills in developing students’ achievements and supporting their learning, while also including the ability to understand their opinions:

“..and very importantly pupils and therefore the thing applies in exactly the same way. Where are the children coming from, why are they presenting like this? Why are they happy? Why are they sad? Why are they upset? Etc.. etc.. Coaching is essential in there..... I believe that the students absolutely benefit, from a school where it’s been led by a person who has a real interest in coaching skills and that those coaching skills cannot but you know help develop other people too, in the same way and therefore the children or students as well”

Amanda cited teaching a child to deal with anxiety through coaching skills by allowing them to think; “there is always plan b..” Moreover, referencing her new acquired coaching skills she argues that “my confidence I suppose to question him. You know in the right way” allowed her to coach the student to arrive at new options. Fidelma concurred with the new practice of distributing leadership practice, acknowledging that this new practice of getting others to think about, and take responsibility for, their own actions stating:

“I’m much more focused on, on encouraging them to take ownership of a situation themselves and with getting them to try and explore what, what could you possibly do here?”

## 4.8 Impact of coaching training on leadership skills

### 4.8.1 Personal skills

The majority of respondents either strongly agreed (n=26, 55%) or agreed (n=16, 34%) that their leadership skills had been developed as a result of their leadership coaching training (see Figure 9). Only five respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

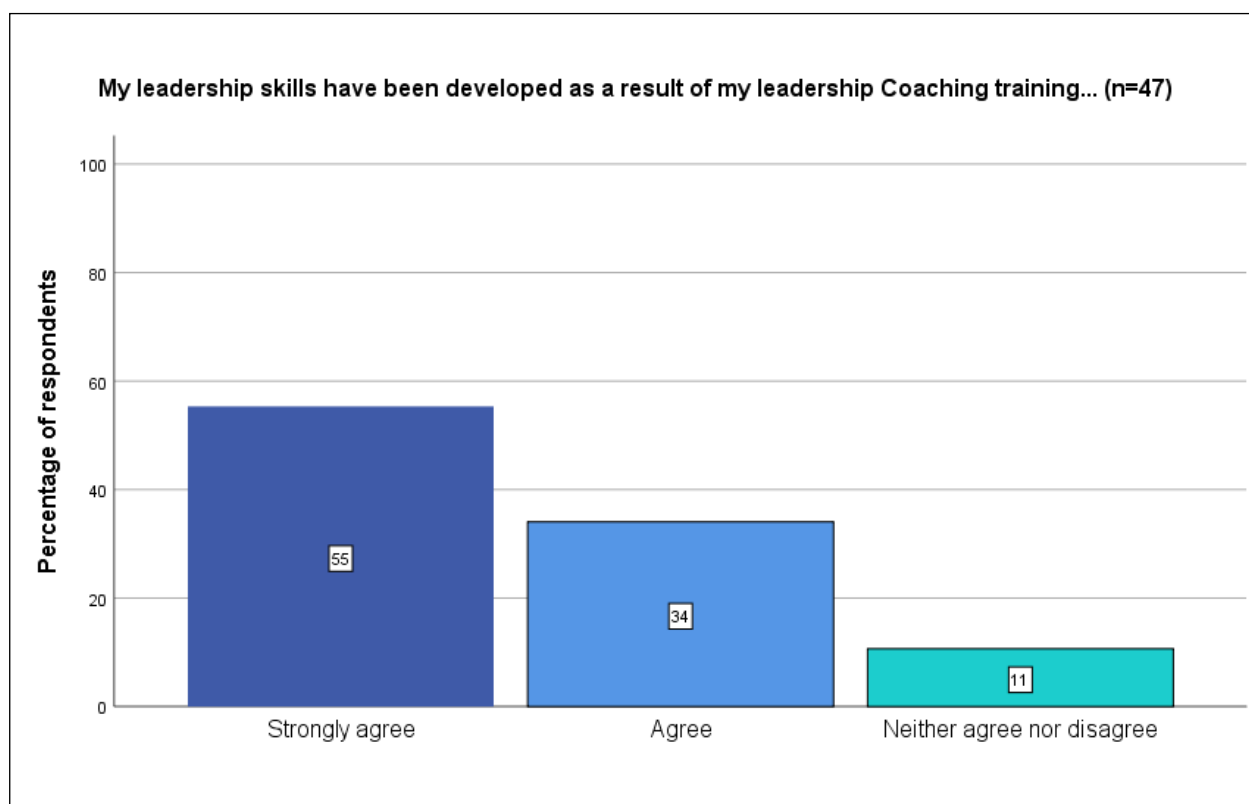


Figure 9 Level of agreement with statement that leadership skills have been developed, as a result of their leadership coaching training.

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.8.1. No differences occurred between demographic variables investigated and the level of agreement with the statement “my leadership skills

have been developed as a result of my leadership coaching training”. This demonstrates that all participants agreed that their leadership skills were developed as a result of leadership coaching training, with the demographics of gender, age and experience and whether they were a teaching or administrative school principal not being a significant factor (using a 5% confidence level, if the P-value is greater than 0.05, the nominal level for statistical significance chosen, it can be concluded that there is no evidence of a statistically significant difference between the groups).

Table 4.8. 1 Leadership skills and coaching training

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	p-value <sup>1</sup>
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender				0.824
Male (n=19)	✓ (57.9) 11	✓ (36.8) 7	✓ (5.3) 1	
Female (n=28)	✓ (53.6) 15	✓ (32.1) 9	✓ (14.3) 4	
Role				1
Administration/Other (n=32)	✓ (56.3) 18	✓ (34.4) 11	✓ (9.4) 3	
Teaching (n=15)	✓ (53.3) 8	✓ (33.3) 5	✓ (13.3) 2	
Age				0.315
25-44 years (n=12)	✓ (33.3) 4	✓ (58.3) 7	✓ (8.3) 1	
45-54 years (n=18)	✓ (55.6) 10	✓ (33.3) 6	✓ (11.1) 2	
55+ years (n=16)	✓ (68.8) 11	✓ (18.8) 3	✓ (12.5) 2	
Number of years as a school principal				0.892
0-5 (n=8)	✓ (50.0) 4	✓ (37.5) 3	✓ (12.5) 1	
5-10 (n=10)	✓ (50.0) 5	✓ (40.0) 4	✓ (10.0) 1	
10-15 (n=11)	✓ (54.5) 6	✓ (36.4) 4	✓ (9.1) 1	
15+ (n=15)	✓ (73.3) 11	✓ (20.0) 3	✓ (6.7) 1	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

#### 4.8.2 Leadership and personal development skills

*Amanda is a primary school principal of a medium sized school in a small town in the West of Ireland. Like Fred, her motivations for studying a Diploma in Coaching were both professional and personal having aspirations to becoming a school principal during the course of her studies something that became a reality for her. Amanda referred to coaching as a 'powerful skill' and recognises the importance of teasing out of others, solutions to their own problems, suggesting that 'it has to come from the person.'*

*Amanda found coaching skills useful when working with students allowing them to tease out other solutions to their problems through effective listening and questioning. She developed confidence in applying a system or a 'right way' of listening and getting others to 'take ownership' of their actions by exploring options through effective questioning and 'feeding forward'. She discovered that effective listening and feedback generated a 'lever to engage deeper dialogue.' It helped her feel she was doing a 'better job' and added to her 'own sense of well-being.' Highlighting 'deep listening' and not responding with answers but using 'powerful questions' a useful technique to enable others.*

*Challenges for Amanda in coaching in a school setting were how to build a coaching culture in schools when it stays 'informal' and the time it takes combined with scepticism all a challenge.' However, she cited that for her she would prefer working with 'someone I didn't know' when considering peer coaching for herself.*

#### **4.8.2.1 Listening skills.**

In analysing the interview data, personal skills such as the skills of active listening and effective questioning were very strong themes that emerged as being important categories of development. Other data collected during the survey highlighted the benefits of coaching training with the formalisation and framework that coaching provided noted as a factor that supported participants. Edel emphasised the tools developed for managing others, while other respondents spoke of the development of their own self-awareness and personal development such as active listening being a new



acquired skill that coaching provided for 26 respondents. Respondent 43 developed listening to what he called “deep listening” a process very few people actually are able to do. Additionally, 11 participants highlighted the importance of focused or framed questions and powerful questions with the need to not “respond all the time” (respondent 33). Citing that often people respond with an answer that is from ones’ own experience rather than viewing it from the other person’s perspective; participants were able to recognise this as a new acquired skill. This enabled the participants to provide better solutions to problems with the skills of summarising as being a vital component of achieving this. Amanda spoke of the feeding back process and reflecting through effective listening “as a lever to engage deeper dialogue.” While respondent 27 explained she uses coaching skills to check that “my understanding of what the person is saying is the same as what they are trying to tell me,” with respondent 31 also citing this as a new skill. This was corroborated by John who stated:

“Definitely the listening is a big thing and I’d say as a result of the course I’m probably more empathetic to staff now. Whereas before (laughs) maybe I was just like Jesus you know this one in again whatever. But I’m definitely more empathetic now and I definitely feel that I’m more; that I display more that I am listening to them, you know.”

Michelle also highlighted listening skills;

“So in actual fact my skill was, the skill that developed most for me was the ability to zip it and to listen. Listening is hearing the words first and hearing the meaning. But then it’s actually understanding why the other person is saying what they’re saying. And the position they’re coming from and that’s actually how it has helped me”

Imelda agreed with the importance of listening in coaching and also believes her listening skills were developed;

“I think it did help me to listen better and to listen at what was not being said as much as what was being said, because I think as teachers we’re very quick, we talk

a lot and we, you know, when I see something I kind of pounce – oh this is how you solve it – whereas it actually made me be more reflective and to listen and to help people tease out things a bit more, it did give me that skill”

Several participants referenced their inability to listen well prior to them taking the coaching training, with most participants highlighting active listening as a new acquired skill. This combined with the ability to use effective questioning allowed principals to develop their leadership skills with others, with some referencing the impact this now had on their own self well-being.

“But I really see the importance of questioning and listening. But for me that in turn makes me feel I’m doing a good job and I feel, which adds to my own sense of well-being”.

(Amanda).

Fidelma also referenced the ability to listen to staff hence building relationships with them:

“Now sometimes they're not coming for the answer at all and that's a very powerful thing..., a very powerful skill that I've learned this year...., to give somebody your time now can actually be very good for maintaining the relationship with them, but it's also then while it's time spent now, it's time saved down the road, because now you have that relationship and they know, he listens to me. So, that's probably a very, very, very powerful skill.”

*John is a deputy principal of a medium-size post primary school in a small urban setting in the West of Ireland. The school caters for a large number of disadvantaged students. John sees his role as managing the teaching and learning in the school and he also takes responsibility for school discipline. Because his school is a disadvantaged school with lots of challenges, John felt that sometimes he was more of a disciplinarian than an empathic leader and found the challenges of dealing with staff quite difficult from time to time.*

*John took up coaching as he felt he needed to develop his personal skills stating that listening was something he didn't do very well in the past and that he is better at listening now and is probably more empathetic to staff as a result of taking up leadership coaching training. John used to get very frustrated dealing with staff coming into him complaining about challenges at work, but now feels that with his coaching course under his belt he is better able to listen to and direct the staff members to solve some of their own problems themselves.*

*For John one of the major challenges of implementing a culture of coaching in schools is time pressures, time for the coach but also time for the coachee, citing that time is a problem in schools now for everybody and with work overload being a big thing, time is always going to be a challenge.*

*John finds his job quite stressful from time to time but has suggested that leadership coaching helps him to recognise his stressors a lot more and hopefully this helps him to deal with it better. Another disappointment for John having completed the course was the lack of recognition by the management bodies of his new acquired coaching skills citing how an interview panel showed no interest in his coaching skills at a recent interview. For John he didn't know whether this was because they did not understand leadership coaching or was it that it was a relatively unknown leadership phenomenon? One of the motivational reasons for John taking up the course was that he had ambition to be a principal of a post primary school*

*and felt that having leadership coaching skills would enhance these opportunities. He wasn't sure whether this updated skills would be recognised by management bodies.*

#### **4.8.2.2 Effective questioning**

“So I would say two big things were the listening and I listening and questioning.”

(Mary)

While active listening was a key skill that was developed during the leadership coaching training that impacted on principal leadership, participants also acknowledged the importance of asking effective questions in moving towards a solution to the issue presented, with Michelle stating “my ability to ask questions has developed greatly.” Amanda concurred and talked about getting greater commitment from people, as a result of effective questioning. The reframing of problems in one’s personal and professional life became another theme for John. Respondents 15,19,26,28,35,44,48 highlighted the skills developed on the program of improved communication and listening. Some also felt they developed their intuition skills.

“Certainly my, the whole area of questioning, I realise now the importance of questioning. You know, asking good questions and questions that will move you forward and move people forward and I loved the whole idea of this feeding forward and I’ve tried to use that so much since.”

(Amanda)

Amanda also referenced personal development skills that could change behaviour:

“The skills then were strong communication skills, questioning, powerful questioning and leaving out the famous why question. The silences, the listening, deep listening, listening. We do tend to listen with a response in our head, or I hear what you’re saying but wait until you hear what happened to me.”

In working with Nvivo software, it is not surprising that listening is identified as the most frequent word from all of the interview data collected with questioning also featuring strongly, (see Figure 10).



Figure 10 Word frequency cloud 100-Nvivo 2019

#### 4.9 Hours spent coaching staff per week

Time has been cited as a significant barrier to effective school leadership coaching throughout this research, and authors in the field of educational leadership have also highlighted the issue of time for school leaders (Smith and Riley, 2016, p. xii; Machin, 2014, p.19). Despite these challenges, almost three-quarters of respondents (n=34, 74%) coached staff for 0-5 hours per week while almost one-fifth (n=9, 20%) coached staff for 5-10 hours per week. Only three respondents coached staff for 10 or more hours per week (see figure 11).

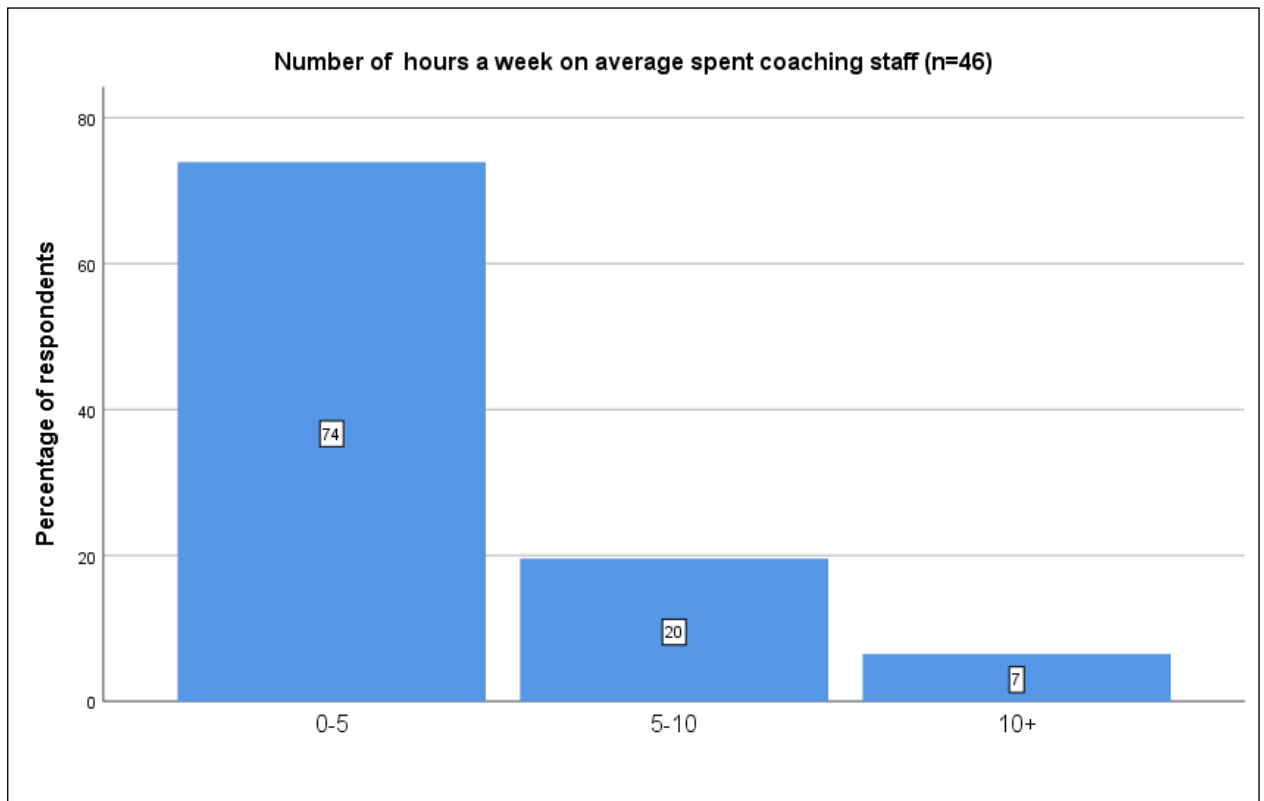
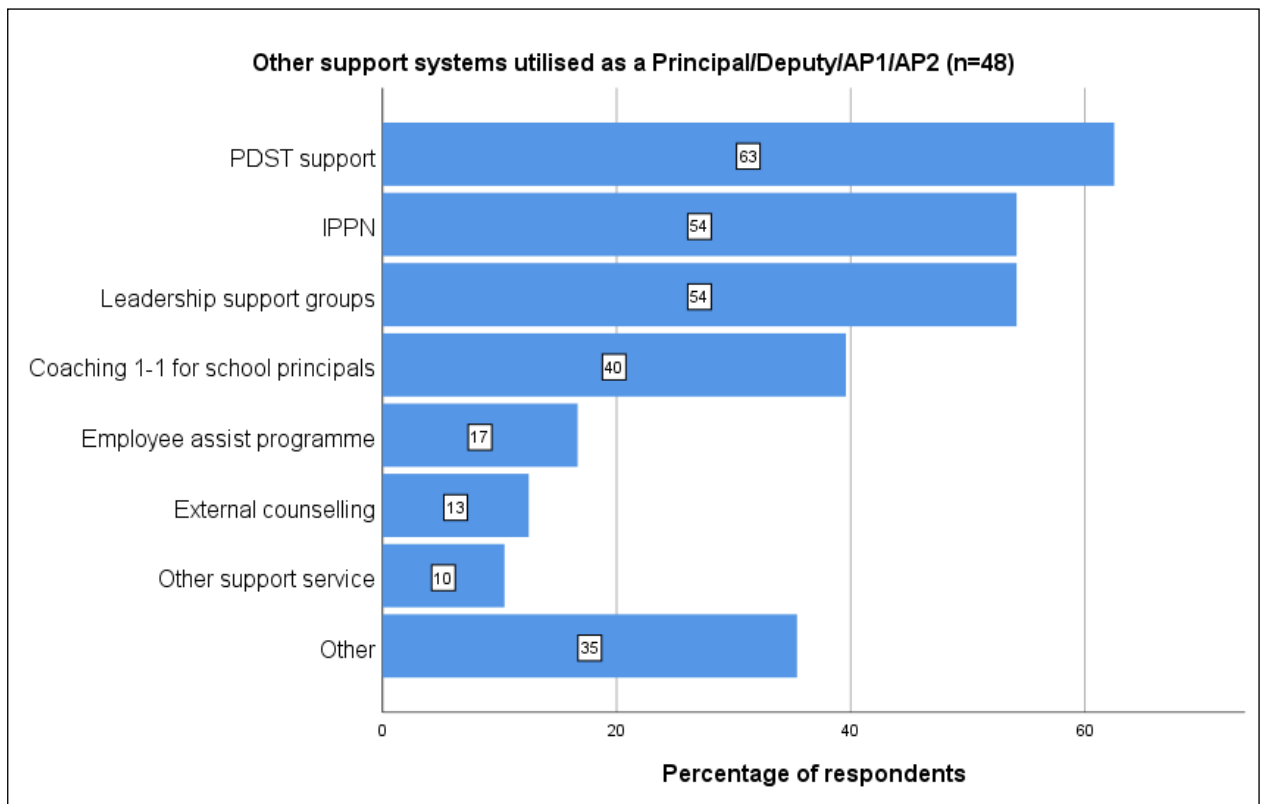


Figure 11 Number of hours a week on average spent coaching staff

#### 4.10 Other supports

While leadership coaching is a new support available to school leaders in Ireland since 2015, the other support systems utilised by the respondents are described in Figure 12. The PDST was the most popular other support system (n=30, 63%) followed by the IPPN

and leadership support groups (n=26, 54% for both) and coaching 1-1 for school principals (n=19, 40%). The employee assist programme (n=8, 17%) and external counselling (n=6, 13%) were less common as support systems among the respondents. The median (IQR) number of other support systems given was 3 (1 - 4). Given these results it is surprising that only 40% of participants expressed that they had availed of one to one coaching with the CSL. On deeper analysis this can be understood, since participants of the leadership coaching programme were also required to attend one on one coaching as part of the training process. Another contributing factor was that at the time of data gathering only 26 of the 48 participants were eligible to receive the CSL one on one coaching. Thus allowing for this 73.8% of those eligible, availed of the service.



**Figure 12 Other support systems utilised as a principal/deputy/ap1/ap2**

*Other sources include Education and Training Boards (ETB), Education Centres, colleagues and family.*

#### 4.11 Skills to be a competent coach after graduating with a coaching Diploma

In analysing the impact of leadership coaching in Ireland, over 70% of respondents (n=34, 71%) either agreed (n=26) or strongly agreed (n=8) that they now have the skills to be a competent coach after having graduated with a coaching Diploma. The remaining respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (n=10) or disagreed (n=4), (see Figure 13). A small number of respondents disagreed that they were competent to work as a coach citing the requirement for further practice and lack of competence when self-comparing to full time business coaches in the field of coaching. Other respondents managed very small groups of people in their role and may not have the same opportunity for practice as principals of larger schools. These were cited as the main reasons recorded during the semi-structured interviews.

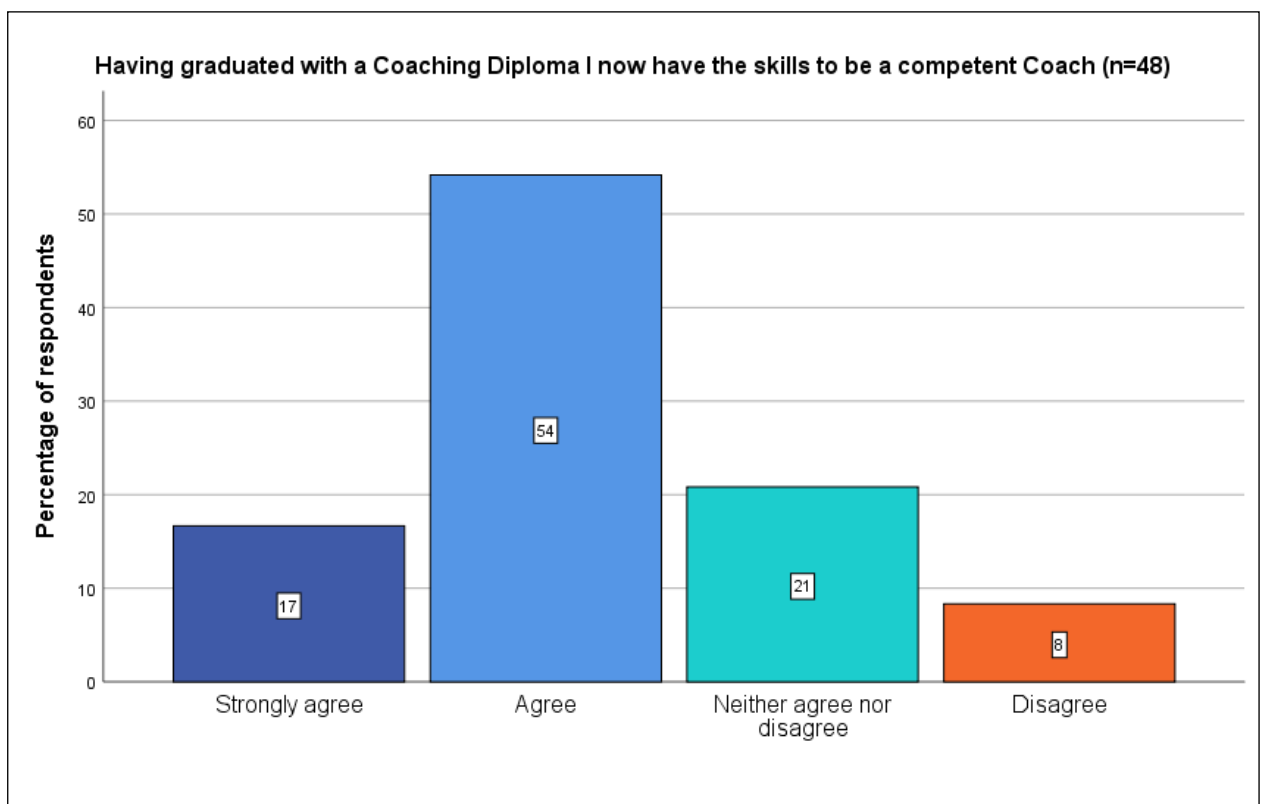


Figure 13 Have skills to be a competent coach after having graduated with a coaching diploma.



## **4.12 Factors that are the main challenge to creating a coaching culture at school**

### **4.12.1 Environmental**

“I mean who does he think he is; or who does she think she is; that she is going to coach me?”

(Dolores).

There are many factors that may have impacted participants’ responses in this section. The first of which was the moratorium on posts of responsibility (AP1 and AP2) since the downturn in the economy in 2008 with many of these posts not reinstated even ten years later. This led to a union response of no co-operation with additional duties being added to teachers’ workload and a refusal by some staff to take on the normal volunteer type of engagements in schools, particularly after school time. This impacted the culture of schools, the ability to distribute leadership effectively and with no career progression for teachers an unwillingness to take on such activities as leadership coaching. While there has been some progression on the reinstatement of career progression in recent years for teachers, there are still outstanding issues that can impact the success of coaching in schools.

In addition to these issues there are many environmental factors that contribute to creating a culture of coaching in a school. This research has highlighted such issues as existing school culture, time, lack of awareness of the concept of coaching, fear of manipulation, confidentiality, school size (too small and too big) as some of the drawbacks (see Figure 14). One of the central emerging themes from the qualitative data gathered as part of the survey data, was the importance of how a school culture embraces leadership change, and whether or not a coaching culture could be developed. Fidelma questioned whether staff were “coachable” and whether a move by the principal to coaching was a type of “self-confrontation” or “analysis” that would “un-nerve.” In order for it to succeed it needed an “all embracing and emotionally intelligent and highly self-aware type of person” where coaching could subsequently be developed naturally. Respondent 33 also concurred that emotional intelligence was an important factor in

changing culture. Peterson (2011), suggested that certain personalities may make coaching difficult such as having a fixed mind-set, being forced into coaching against their will, lacking trust and openness, and perhaps feeling manipulated by management with coaching a disguise. Citing that people with emotional and mental issues may pose a problem for a coach, he suggested that often people who refuse to engage in coaching often don't want to be forced "to change in ways that others want them to change" (Peterson, 2011, p. 547). He also suggested that often such people are the people who need coaching the most.

Respondent 23 spoke of the reality of coaching in schools stating "coaching remains relatively unknown in the education system", a view supported by respondent 15 when presenting for interview. Several of the respondents highlighted a lack of coaching culture in schools as a possible reason for this, with some respondents concerned that some teachers were not coachable and that coaching could be viewed as "self-confrontational" (Mary)

"It's hard to build a culture around coaching if you don't have it, you know if it stays informal."

(Amanda)

Other respondents believed that the school inspectorate never mentioned leadership coaching when visiting schools, neither did the support services such as the PDST. The lack of engagement of the free service available to principals was also highlighted by respondent 23 and a concern for the future viability of the DES supported programme.

"So why does the Centre for School Leadership only have 547 people and why is it moving so slowly? And why are people not taking it up? The second biggest barrier is time, so there are a huge number of principals who really want to have this coaching. But believe they don't have the time.... and don't understand that by accessing coaching they probably would make the time."

(Liam)

Survey data supported the interview data with the majority of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the lack of awareness of the coaching process (n=41, 85%), curriculum overload (n=39, 83%), time restraints (n=36, 75%), lack of training on leadership coaching (n=36, 75%) and cost (n=26, 54%) were the main challenges to creating a coaching culture at school. Only 21% (n=10) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the staff and ISM team may be unwilling to engage with coaching, and that this would be a challenge to creating a coaching culture in the school (see Figure 14). Walsh, (2013) in his research on principal workload in Ireland, analysed by activity bands the various responsibilities principals involved themselves with. Findings from this research suggested, the leading cause of workload was indicated to be administration (43.2%), followed by student related (22.4%), staff related (12.1%), parent related (10.0%), general activities (8.0%) and facilities management (4.0%). A further breakdown of 43.2% administration is categorised with 65% general administration (some of this is attributed to teaching and learning duties such as preparing for staff meetings, presentations and subcommittee meetings), 20.6% related to Board of Management issues (which will have some teaching and learning activities) with only 6.8% finance and budgeting and 3.1% reporting to the DES. This research also demonstrates the administrative workload and lack of importance of finance and reporting, and the role that general administration fulfils (some which would be business related activities which could include staff coaching but this is not highlighted in the research). While this research was aimed exclusively at post primary schools in Ireland, the role of principal in both cases has very similar characteristics.

Workload and time were cited by many participants in the interview data as a challenge in creating a coaching culture in this study:

“Like time is just a problem in schools now for everybody and I suppose programme overload, like with teachers is a big thing. With all these things coming in. Time would be the big thing”.

(John)

The challenge was also reported by Fidelma:

“because it's new that was my train of thought it's like anything new that's in a school, anything new you bring into a school you've to consider there's a whole change process to go through here to actually bring a coaching culture into the school and I don't think it's possible to bring a coaching culture into a school overnight. I think it's something that going to take like any other change that you really want to implement in the school, it is going to take three to five years to actually bring that and possibly longer because this is a brand new thing coming into schools, but it certainly starts with the principals.”

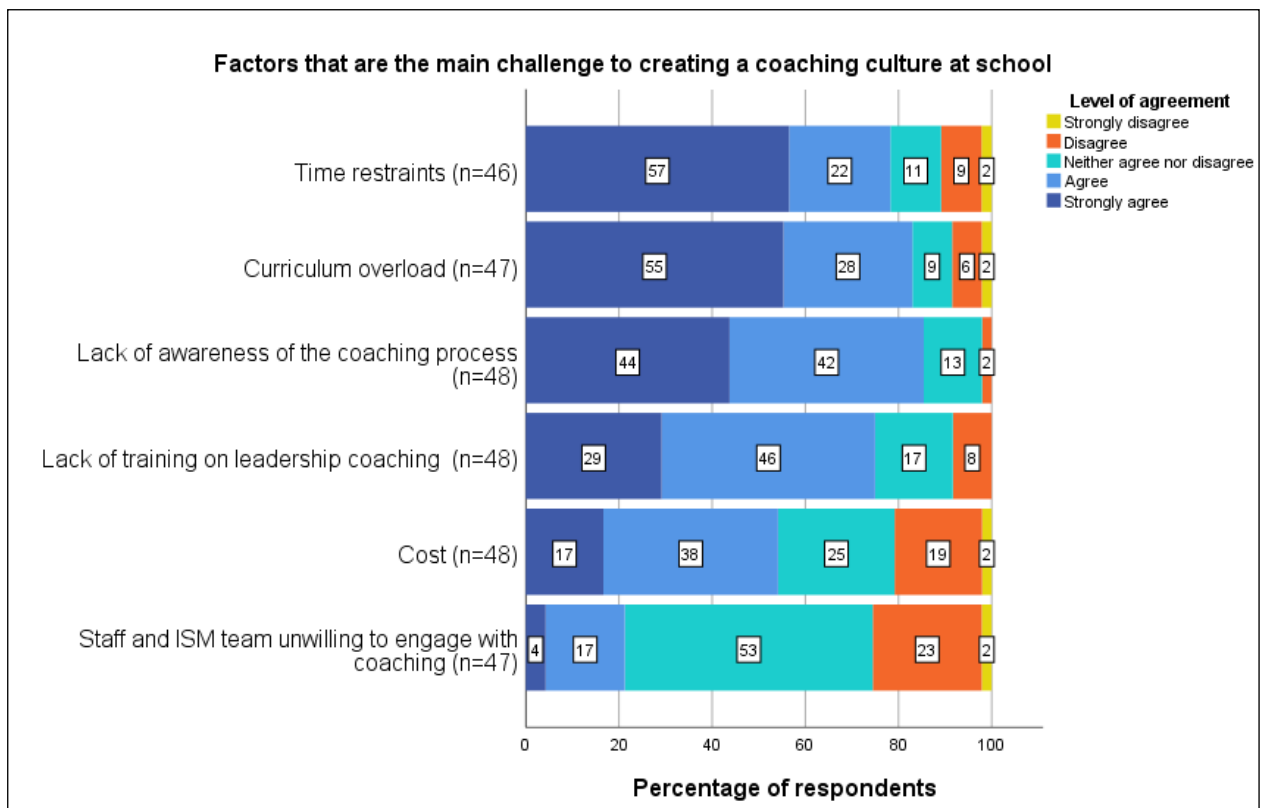


Figure 14 Level of agreement with factors that are the main challenge to creating a coaching culture at school

(The “other” notable challenges listed, include the need for endorsement by the school inspectorate/PDST and financial support given to schools to support a culture of coaching).

A further analysis of the main challenge to creating a coaching culture at school (time has been highlighted as the main one), split by role are presented in Table 4.12.1. A statistically significant relationship was not found between level of agreement with the statement that time restraints are a main challenge to creating a coaching culture and the role of the respondent ( $p=0.116$ ), demonstrating that regardless of whether one was a teaching principal or administrative principal, time was equally a challenge for creating a coaching culture for both roles. While many teaching principals may see administrative principals as having more time to carry out coaching activities, this research highlights that this is not the case and may suggest that the bigger the school gets, the bigger the workload increases, (the smaller the value of P derived from Fisher's Exact Test the greater the evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis that this is no difference between the groups).

Table 4.12. 1 Time restraints by role

Role	Time restraints are a main challenge to creating a coaching culture at school					p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Administration/Other	✓ (3.1) 1	✓ (12.5) 4	✓ (6.3) 2	✓ (28.1) 9	✓ (50.0) 16	0.116
Teaching (n=14)	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (21.4) 3	✓ (7.1) 1	✓ (71.4) 10	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

#### 4.13 Agreement with the statement that peer coaching is a way to develop leadership skills

“Suppose if I’m being honest, personally, I’d probably prefer somebody I didn’t know”

(Amanda)

There are different views on the future of coaching (see Figure 15). While the survey response was very positive towards peer coaching, the interview data presented some caveats. Some participants believed that peer coaching would not work, as issues such as trust, experience and coaching qualifications may be a concern. Others highlighted whether one would be free to open up with a colleague in the same school. Most of those

interviewed spoke of the challenge in creating a local culture of coaching that would require most staff to be trained up at a significant cost:

“...and if coaching is, as I would think, an integral part of teaching and learning it should be done maybe in the colleges or it should be done as part of their training before they come in and then to be a principal it would be an extra level of, of training...”

(Imelda)

Interestingly over 80% of survey respondents (n=38, 81%) either strongly agreed (n=24) or agreed (n=14) that peer coaching is a way to develop leadership skills, while 11% (n=5) either disagreed (n=4) or strongly disagreed (n=1). The remaining respondents (n=4) neither agreed nor disagreed (see Figure 15).

Of course, it is well known that peer feedback is sometimes unreliable. Peers sometimes lie to each other, as they may not have the required skills to give feedback of a coaching nature, and particularly they may be reluctant to give negative feedback to their peers since this could impact the relationship. However, when done well and with appropriate training, peer “feedback has been found to promote deep learning” (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 181).

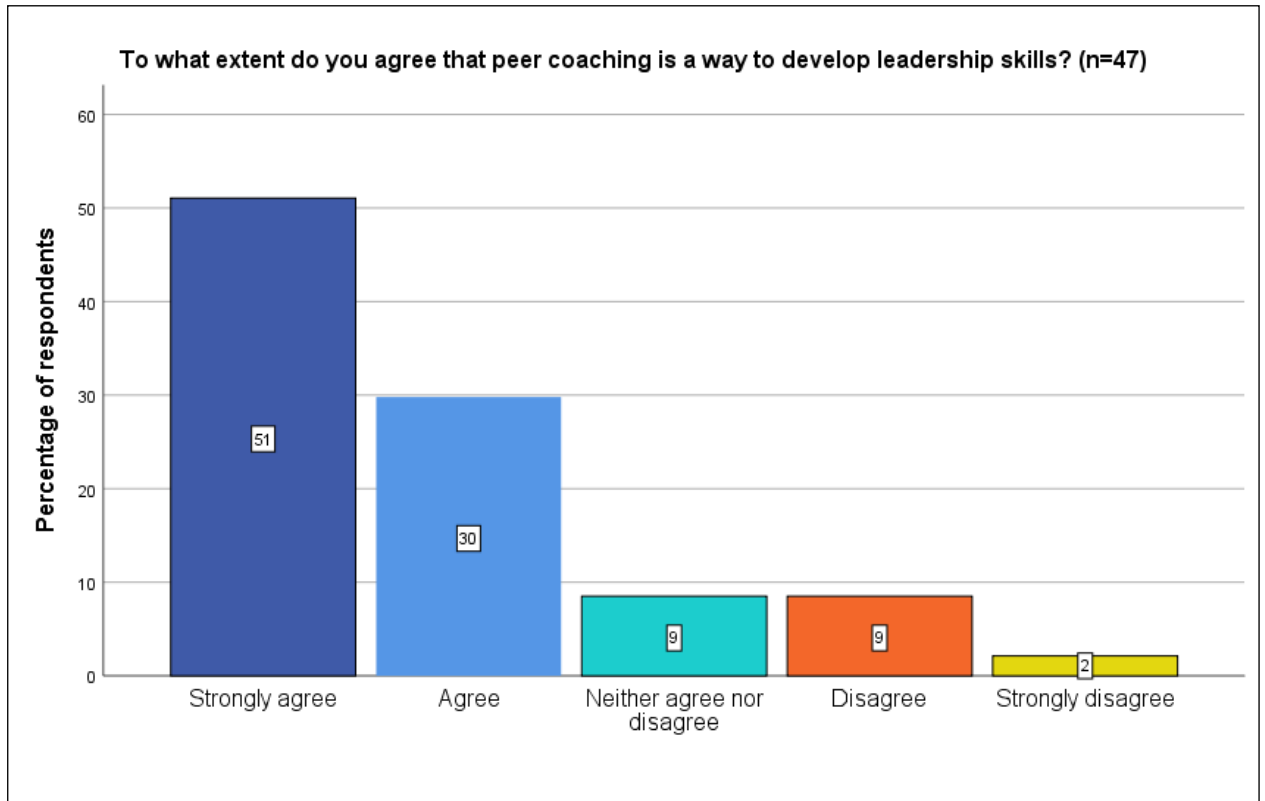


Figure 15 Level of agreement with statement that peer coaching is a way to develop leadership skills

#### 4.13.1 Peer coaching as a way to develop leadership skills?

Responses to the question split by gender are presented in Table 4.13.1. Gender was not significantly associated with level of agree with the statement ( $p=0.821$ ). Hence gender is not a factor that impacts peer coaching as a process.

Table 4.13.1. 1 Peer coaching and leadership skills

		(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	p-value <sup>1</sup>
Gender							0.821
Male (n=19)	✓	(47.4) 9	✓ (26.3) 5	✓ (10.5) 2	✓ (10.5) 2	✓ (5.3) 1	
Female (n=28)	✓	(53.6) 15	✓ (32.1) 9	✓ (7.1) 2	✓ (7.1) 2	(0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

Regulation, supervision and competence were all cited by respondents as issues that would need to be addressed prior to peer coaching in this study. Other respondents were concerned about internal coaching, and how the relationship of teacher/principal in the day to day role could be compromised;

“if you’re a leader of a school and you’re having those dialogues with people, if you fall out with those people over something that you have to do in the school that they don’t like, you can find yourself in a position then where they’re saying that the dialogue that they had with you as a coach (is different) , like in other words; where is the demarcation line between you as a principal and having to do specific you know; tasks; maybe managing behaviours or whatever and then that’s a very grey area.”

(Mary)

While research pointed to the use of an external coach as being more effective (Tompkins, 2018; Joyce and Showers, 2002), the current model, as devised by the CSL, is that principals should avail themselves of external coaching. Additional studies carried out by Fillery-Travis and Lane, (2006) suggested that large corporations tend to use external coaches (budgets may be bigger) with 51% of 1153 organisations in the UK investigated using external coaches and with 41% using internal coaches. Hence, it appears that peer coaching looks good in theory, but when investigated requires a huge investment and cultural shift before teachers would be competent to coach each other. This topic is discussed further in section 4.16 and 4.28.1 under the future direction of coaching.



#### 4.14 1-1 Coaching with the Centre for School Leadership

An interesting statistic from this research highlights that only one third of respondents (n=16, 33%) had availed themselves of one-to-one coaching with the CSL, while a further seven respondents had not availed themselves of it, but planned on doing so in the future. The remaining respondents (n=25, 52%) had not taken advantage of the one-to-one coaching, \* See figure 16.

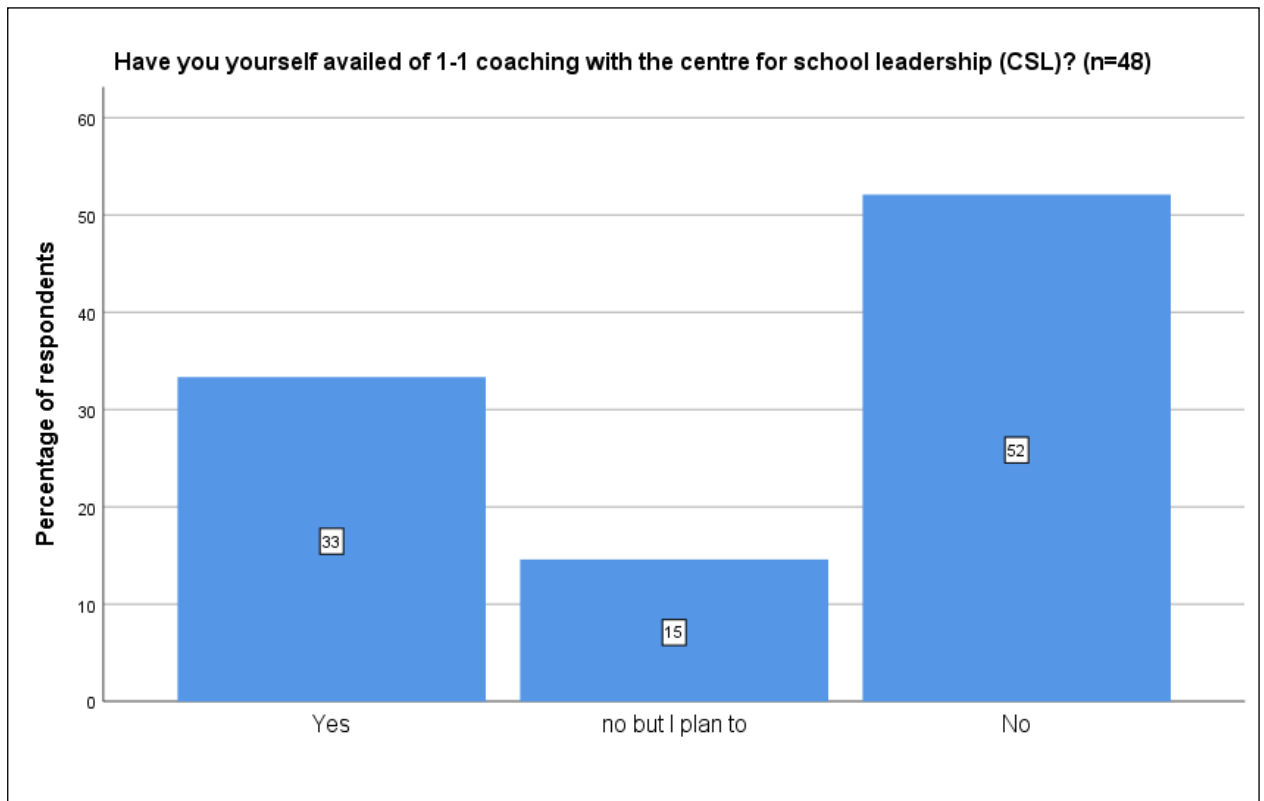


Figure 16 Availed of 1-1 coaching with the centre for school leadership

\*(On further analysis of these figures, one factor that may have impacted this outcome is that participants would have been attending one-to-one coaching (peer coaching/supervised triad coaching) while studying the leadership coaching diploma course, which may have impacted their decision to attend the CSL coaching service that is available for principals. Also some participants were ineligible due to their role structure, hence the real figure of those attending one on one CSL coaching is 73.8%).

Responses to the question split by gender are presented in Table 4.14.1.1 Availing themselves of one-to-one coaching with the centre for school leadership did not differ by

gender ( $p=0.850$  from Fisher's Exact Test) demonstrating that gender is not a significant factor in those availing themselves of the CSL one to one coaching.

Table 4.14.1. 1 Availing of one-to-one coaching-Fisher's Exact Test

	Yes	No	No, but I plan to	p-value <sup>1</sup>
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender				0.850
Male (n=19)	✓ (36.8) 7	✓ (52.6) 10	✓ (10.5) 2	
Female (n=29)	✓ (31.0) 9	✓ (51.7) 15	✓ (17.2) 5	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

#### 4.15 Opinions on whether coaching and mentoring are the same process

The literature highlights that there was a noted difference in mentoring (working with an experienced colleague) and coaching (working to enhance performance but not experience based, but competent coaching skills based). Three quarters of respondents ( $n=37$ , 75%) either disagreed ( $n=25$ ) or strongly disagreed ( $n=12$ ) with the statement that coaching and mentoring are words for the same process (see figure 17). This demonstrated a thorough understanding of the difference between coaching and mentoring, a theme that would have been studied during the coaching Diploma training. Principals generally may not have this level of awareness, as often the terms are used interchangeably.

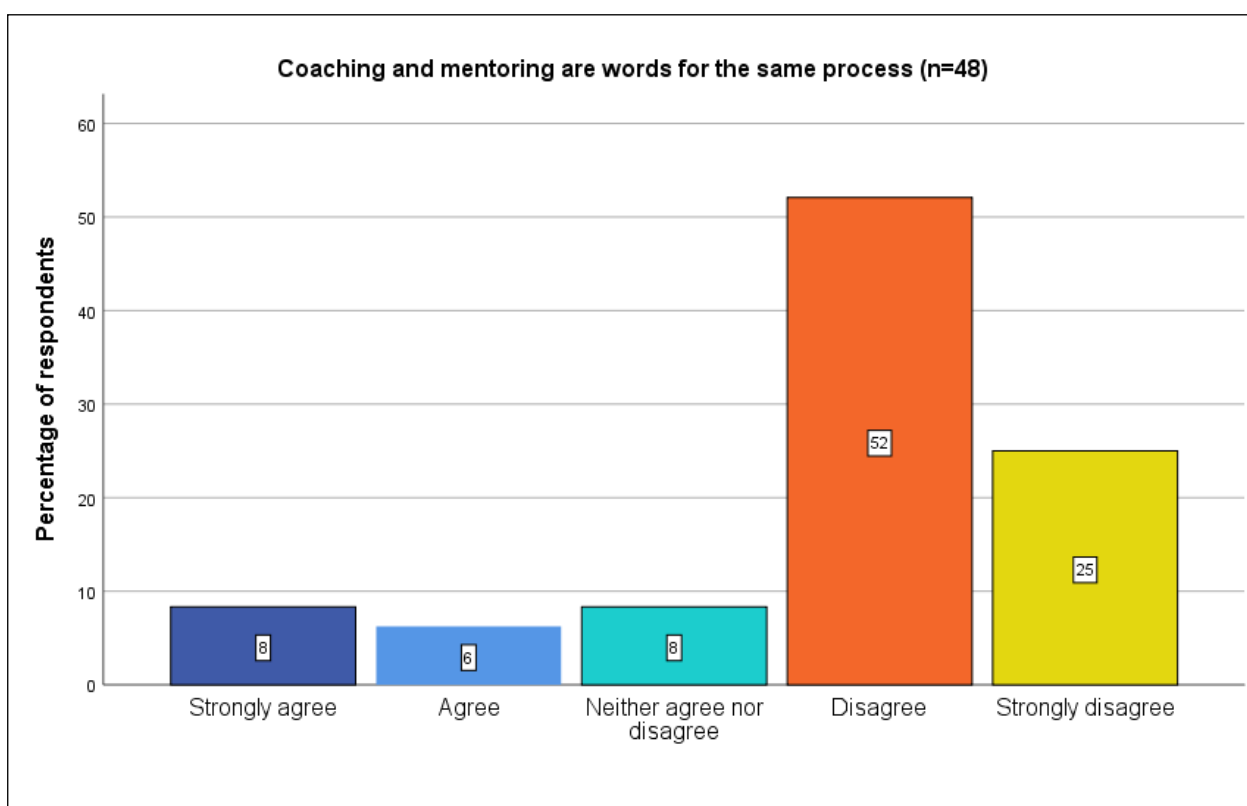


Figure 17 Level of agreement with the statement that coaching and mentoring are words for the same process.

#### 4.16 Opinions on how coaching should develop in the future for school principal/deputy/ap1/ap2

This section goes beyond the debate of whether peer coaching should be a useful model of coaching in schools, and looks at a more generic view of the future direction of coaching in education. The levels of agreement with statements related to how coaching should develop in the future for school principal/dp/ap1/ap2 are presented in Figure 18. The majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that principals/dp/ap1/ap2 should be able to study a fully funded Diploma in coaching with substitute cover (n=42, 88%). While most respondents favoured a fully funded coaching Diploma for school principals, there was not a strong consensus for this not being a compulsory requirement with some suggesting that PDST could support coaching (n=33, 69% strongly agreed or agreed). Not everyone agreed that it should be mandatory for all principals to have a formal qualification in leadership coaching (n=27, 56%), with less than half of the

respondents (n=20, 42%) strongly agreeing or agreeing that coaching should be compulsory

Peer coaching should be supported by the DES with extra administration days (n=37, 77%), was another recommendation but interview data cited many caveats such as concerns around training, ethics, confidentiality and time.

There was also an agreement that further work needs to be completed by CSL to develop coaching as a leadership process with a strong belief that further action was required. The majority of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the role of the CSL is sufficient (n=32, 67%) and that no further action is required (n=40, 89%).

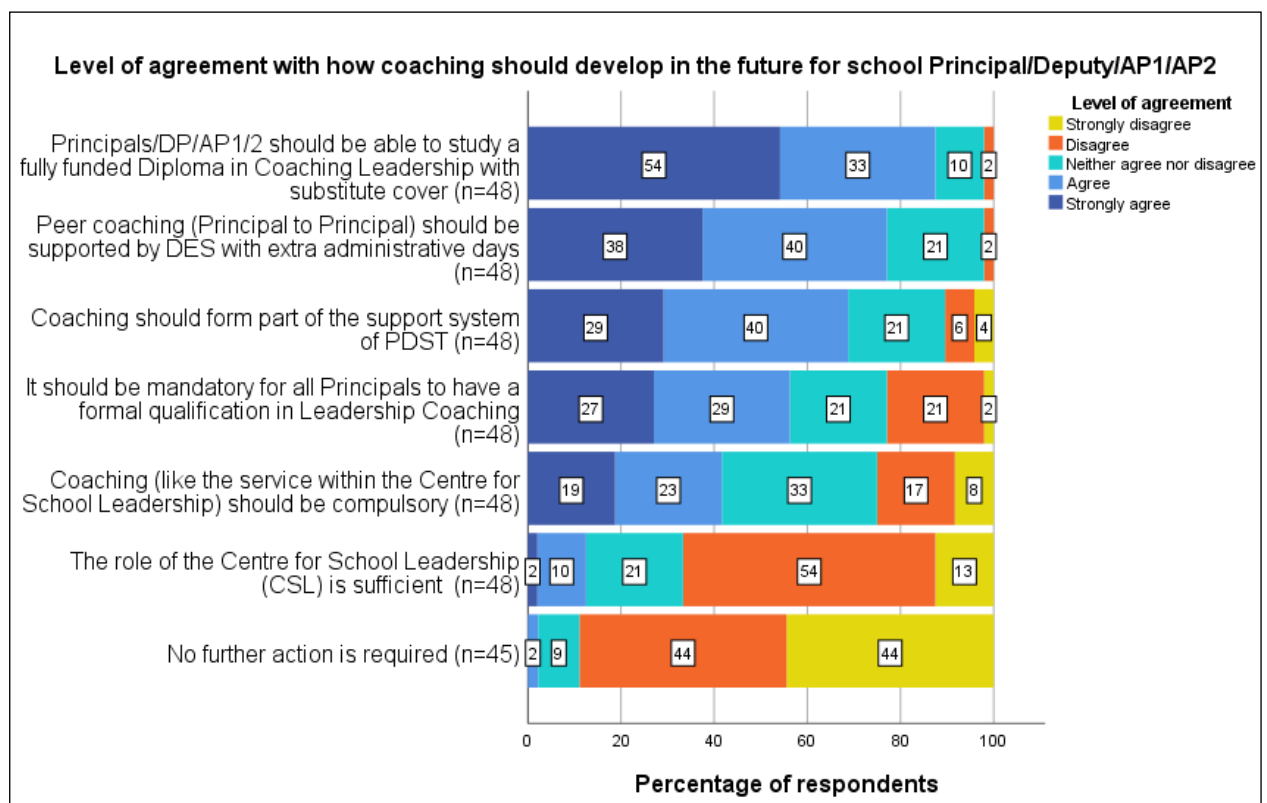


Figure 18 Level of agreement with how coaching should develop in the future for school principal/deputy/ap1/ap2

There is an overwhelming agreement from participants that leadership coaching for principals should be funded by the DES from both the interview data and survey results;

“I mean, I mean, I mean leaders, leaders; principals in schools give so much to the job above and beyond most people’s realisation. They really do, I think it would be insulting to ask them to pay for that sort of support.... I think it’s a great recognition from the department that coaching does make a difference, the fact that they fund this (referring to CSL coaching). You know it’s, it’s a fantastic acknowledgement and a step forward saying this actually is so useful to principals that we’ll fund it and I think, I think that’s brilliant. I do”.

(Fred)

#### **4.17 Ensuring the successful delivery of coaching for school leaders**

“Oh, **time, time** I mean there’s absolutely no **time** in schools for anything”

(Betty)

All respondents ranked the issues that they considered to be most important in ensuring the delivery of coaching for school leaders, and these are the results presented below in Figure 19. Time emerged again as a significant issue for what was required to coach effectively (n=20, 44%) with workload (n=18, 40%) also being the issues most often considered to be the most important issues that can affect the successful delivery of coaching for school leaders. While these two concerns somewhat impact each other, time and workload were also significant concerns in Walsh’s study, (2013) with workload volume a significant concern for leaders, and the role of principal as a solo leadership role that can no longer be maintained, unless distributed throughout the organisation. It also reflected the increased role of accountability and performance related work patterns that now have found their way into educational leadership. Principal workload as a significant concern for school leaders was also cited in other literature (Sugrue, 2014; Oplatka, 2017; Smith and Riley, 2016; Klocko and Wells, 2015; Maxwell and Riley, 2016) and the challenge to find time to effectively embed leadership coaching was a huge challenge. Participants in the interviews also echoed this finding, with time and workload being

significant factors that impact leadership coaching in schools. John refers to “time pressures” on schools that limit how much time can be devoted to coaching;

“The obvious one. Time both I suppose for the coach and the coachee. Like time is just a problem in schools now for everybody. And I suppose programme overload, like with teachers is a big thing. With all these things coming in. Time would be the big thing”.

For Schneider (2018), time was a big constraint on the role of school principal even where no coaching may be taking place. In real terms where principals may have a staffing of 20, this would require 20 hours every second week, which would not be possible in the life of schools. Amanda mentioned “time definitely” with Edel corroborating this stating “time and scepticism” as being obstacles to the coaching process. While Liam acknowledged the time required to carry out coaching, there was also the time to reflect on sessions and perhaps do some preparation for next sessions; this is often missed in allocating the time required. While this is true she also highlighted that participants could actually gain time by taking the time for leadership coaching:

“The second biggest barrier is time, so there are a huge number of principals who really want to have this coaching. But believe they don’t have the time.... and don’t understand that by accessing coaching, they probably would make the time!”

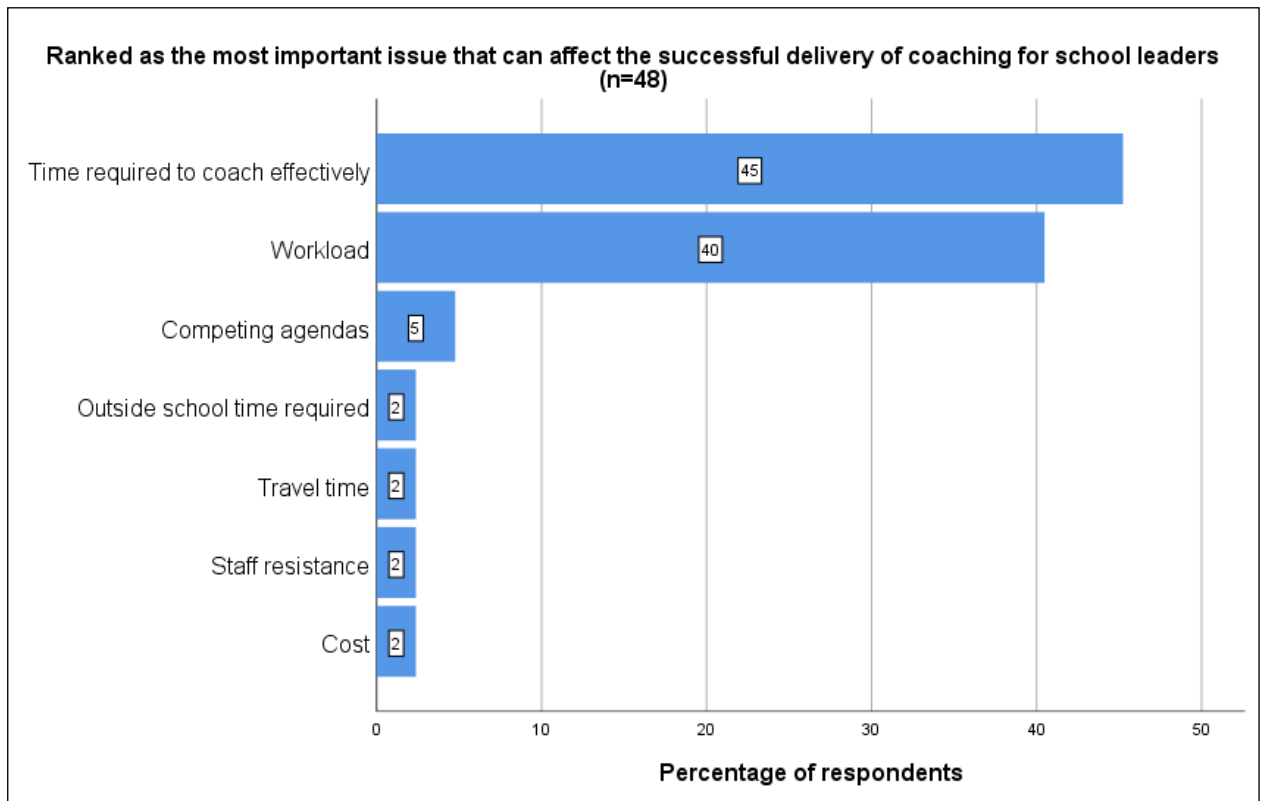


Figure 19 Most important issues affecting the successful delivery of coaching for school leaders.

From the survey data presented in figure 19 above, the time required to coach effectively was also considered to be the most important issue with 74% (n=31) of respondents ranking it as 1 or 2. The next most important issue was workload, with 64% (n=27) of respondents ranking it as 1 or 2. This was followed by competing agendas, staff resistance, cost and outside school time required. Travel time was considered to be the least important issue, with 81% (n=34) of respondents ranking it as 7 (see table 4.17.1).

Table 4.17. 1 Importance of Factors affecting take-up of coaching

n=42<sup>1</sup>

	Ranking						
	1. Most important	2	3	4	5	6	7. Least important
Time required to coach effectively	19	12	4	4	3	0	0
Workload	17	10	7	5	2	0	1
Competing agendas	2	10	10	8	7	4	1
Staff resistance	1	6	7	8	8	8	4
Cost	1	3	8	7	9	9	5
Outside school time required	1	0	6	10	7	8	10
Travel time	1	1	0	0	6	13	21

<sup>1</sup>n is presented in table

Note: n=42 did all 7 rankings and those are results presented.

#### 4.18 Opinions on the impact of leadership coaching on well-being

“I think that coaching brings an awareness. It brings, I suppose if you want, a renewed energy to actually look at yourself and at your own practice and it doesn’t matter what that practice is. So I believe that coaching helps you to take a step back, it helps you to get off the dance floor onto the balcony.”

(Michelle)

This section deals with the second research question. Does leadership coaching have any impact on principal well-being? The majority of respondents (n=40, 83%) either strongly agreed (n=24) or agreed (n=16) that leadership coaching had improved their general sense of well-being. Three respondents disagreed and the remaining five respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (see Figure 20). While there may be many reasons for these eight respondents answering in this way, some respondents highlighted toxic cultures, personality type and reluctance to enter personal relationships (respondent 34) as issues that may affect well-being, while respondent 30 highlighted that schools were so busy that it was hard to take time to reflect, being overworked and tired often. Respondent 27 attributed their well-being to the duty of the school principal, thus contributing to responses that coaching had not improved their general sense of well-being. However, this view was very much the minority view, with most respondents realising well-being was within their own control;



"I would say that it has very much impacted on my well-being in the sense that feeling of being you know so responsible for Miss will fix it... finding the gap; to me coaching has afforded the gap that actually no; I am as much a leader as you are and there is no doubt you are responsible. But you are not responsible to fix everything... you are responsible you know that it gets fixed..... but you know the gap is that it's about encouraging people to take more responsibility for what is theirs and you owning the responsibility for what is yours and differentiating better between those".

(Mary)

Mary spoke about how she always "reacted" to everyone in her life from children, spouse and work colleagues, but now is able to step back from it and not let it annoy her anymore. While this helped Mary in her role, Edel went further stating that she worked with so many staff that "... I don't think I'd be able to sustain that without the coaching." Imelda attributed her new coaching skills to allow her deal more affectively with the well-being of the staff she was responsible for, with Amanda also very aware of her own well-being stating that coaching "... makes me feel I'm doing a good job, ... which adds to my own sense of well-being." Fred also saw the leadership coaching training as a benefit to his well-being and stated:

"the coaching course has, has improved all areas of my life, because you can't look at any area in isolation and so you improve one area, you're automatically improving all the areas and so it allowed me as a professional to look after my personal life as part of my professional development".

Fidelma also acknowledged the role leadership coaching had on well-being and talked about how leadership coaching gave her a sense of balance in her life:

"I definitely think; actually I can, I can say the coaching does have a very positive impact and it is in this way, the challenges you're faced with as a principal still remain the same, but through coaching you develop an ability to realise that the other person has the ability to generate solutions for themselves and can take

responsibility for their own actions and their own decisions and there's also the element that I don't have to go away carrying everybody else's worries and stresses; there is only so much that I can do once I've weighed up all the different options for myself. So, yes coaching definitely has definitively."

Respondents 7,10,11,22,24, 34 confirmed that coaching had the potential to develop skills that built leadership relationships, with respondent 7 highlighting that the program allowed her to be "more confident and ambitious, more positive and led to improved relationships" thus contributing to her well-being. Hence she stated:

"It (coaching) has been give me the skills to re-frame problem areas in both my personal and professional life" and "increased my awareness of how our personal and professional lives are inextricably linked"

Respondent 13 made the point that coaching "gives you a broader outlook on holistic education", with respondent 14 seeing the power of limiting beliefs and how coaching can use leverage to get people to focus on their strengths. Respondent 43 highlighted the building of staff resilience as a factor in coaching practice, while respondents 29 and 37 also highlighted the benefit of coaching on personal skills, citing their development of patience when dealing with others, while respondent 40 highlighting how coaching helped develop awareness of values for others allowing more tolerance of others views.

Respondent 16 mentioned that coaching skills allowed her to self-prioritise and to realise what she could control and accept and influence at work, hence allowing her to accept her surroundings better. Respondent 27 went further attributing coaching skills to giving her the ability to deal with bullying at school, and to engage with others. For respondent 47 coaching training "slowed down my work pace", while respondent 48 spoke of a better work life balance,

"I stopped people pleasing all the time, as I now try to get them to see they are self-responsible. I've become more assertive"

However, some participants expressed divergent views on this topic with respondent 27 highlighting that it was a leader's responsibility to ensure the well-being of all staff. This

was very much the minority view however with the majority of participants acknowledging that coaching had impacted their well-being positively.

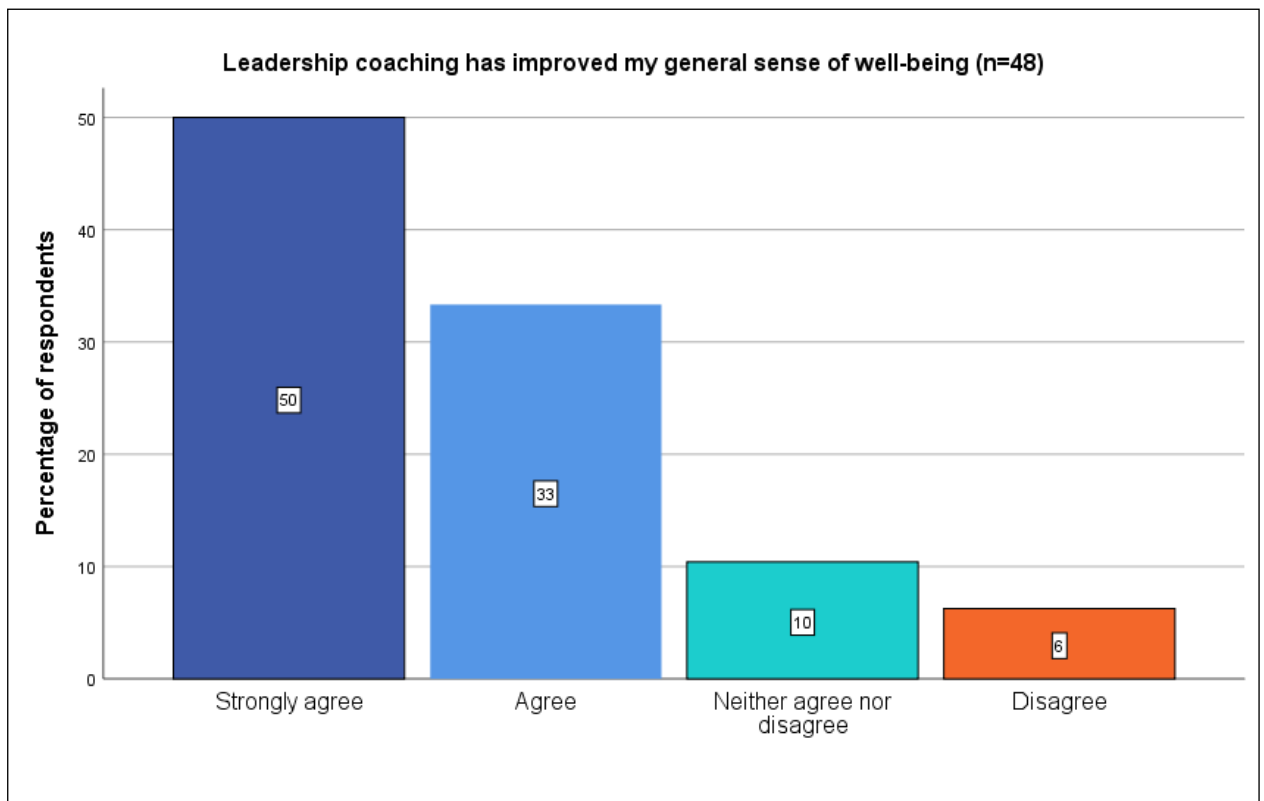


Figure 20 Level of agreement with the statement that leadership coaching has improved the respondents' general sense of well-being.

Responses to the question split by gender, role and age are presented in Table 4.18.1. A relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.046$ ) at the 5% level, was found between gender and level of agreement with the statement "leadership coaching has improved my general sense of well-being" with male respondents being more likely to disagree with the statement. Role and age of the respondents were not associated with level of agreement with the statement. This highlighted that for females, leadership coaching training had a bigger impact on their well-being than it did for males, but that school size, age and experience are not influencing factors that impact well-being for those who have availed themselves of leadership coaching training.

Table 4.18. 1 Leadership coaching and well-being – Fisher’s Exact Test

	Leadership coaching has improved my general sense of well-being				p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender					0.046
Male (n=19)	✓ (52.6) 10	✓ (31.6) 6	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (15.8) 3	
Female (n=29)	✓ (48.3) 14	✓ (34.5) 10	✓ (17.2) 5	✓ (0.0) 0	
Role					0.586
Administration/Other (n=33)	✓ (48.5) 16	✓ (36.4) 12	✓ (12.1) 4	✓ (3.0) 1	
Teaching (n=15)	✓ (53.3) 8	✓ (26.7) 4	✓ (6.7) 1	✓ (13.3) 2	
Age					0.491
25-44 years (n=12)	✓ (33.3) 4	✓ (41.7) 5	✓ (8.3) 1	✓ (16.7) 2	
45-54 years (n=18)	✓ (61.1) 11	✓ (27.8) 5	✓ (5.6) 1	✓ (5.6) 1	
55+ years (n=17)	✓ (47.1) 8	✓ (35.3) 6	✓ (17.6) 3	✓ (0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher’s Exact Test

#### 4.19 Conclusions on well-being and coaching

“There is a need for the DES to come to the realization that staff well-being is an essential precursor to ensuring student well-being. You can’t have one without the other”

(Mary)

Most of the respondents of this research suggested that coaching helped them improve their own sense of well-being, uncover stresses, and provide strategies to move forward through a better understanding of self. Grant (2006, p.17) suggested that coaching had the “potential to be a major force for the promotion of well-being” with school principals being the driving force behind its merits (Gyllemsten and Palmer, 2006; Bush, 2007; Day, 2007; Gorham et al., 2008; Grant et al., 2009). Thus, leadership coaching training for principals can provide a significant contribution to well-being (Sardar and Galdames, 2018). Peterson (2011) suggested that there is substantial evidence to state that coaching can be an effective development tool that leads to significant improvement results and in some case can have the highest impact of any strategy.

#### 4.20 Opinions on the need for coaching and success factors

This section examined responses to a summary overview of the data collected. For all but two of the statements, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements (see Figure 21). Only 21% (n=10) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed

with the statement “coaching makes me more accountable to the DES” while 10% (n=5) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “coaching is just another task I need to do on top of an already overburdened workload”. 96% (n=46) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the relationship between the coach and the coachee is of paramount importance for successful outcomes. 98% (n=47) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the fact that coaching is an effective process for school leadership development. 85% (n=41) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that workload affected their general sense of health and well-being with 89% (n=43) either strongly agreeing or agreeing that coaching had supported them in their general sense of health and well-being, which is one of the research questions of this study.

85% (n=41) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that principals should work with an external coach with only 8% (n=4) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. It is interesting that 92% (n=44) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that coaching had helped them with their overall job performance with 91% (n=43) either strongly agreeing or agreeing that principals should engage in coaching as part of their self-development as leaders. In responding to the accountability and performance part of the role of school principal 79% (n=38) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that coaching supported them in managing this aspect of the role, which is another significant finding in this study. 73% (n=35) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that newly appointed principals should complete a Diploma in coaching once appointed to the role. However, interview data suggested it should not be compulsory for them to do so. 85% (n=41) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they would support the idea of peer coaching. Only 10% (n=5) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that coaching was just another task to accomplish, on top of an already overburdened role, while only 21% (n=10) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that availing themselves of coaching made them more accountable to the DES.

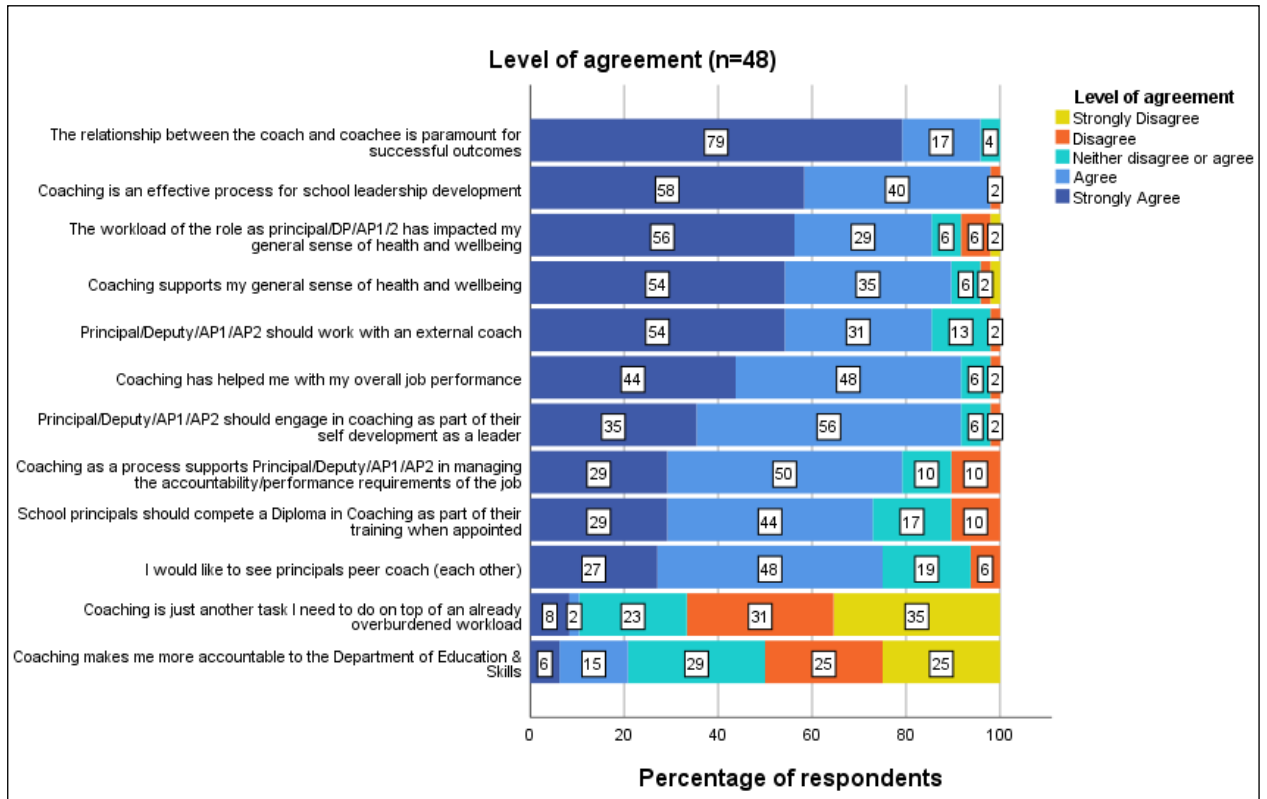


Figure 21 Level of agreement with coaching statements

#### 4.20.1 Relationship of the coach and coachee

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.20.1. Gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement “The relationship between the coach and coachee is paramount for successful outcomes”.

Table 4.20. 1 The relationship between coach and coachee-Fisher's Exact Test

Responses to the question split by: gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal

	The relationship between the coach and coachee is paramount for successful outcomes			p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender				0.850
Male (n=19)	✓ (73.7) 14	✓ (21.1) 4	✓ (5.3) 1	
Female (n=29)	✓ (82.8) 24	✓ (13.8) 4	✓ (3.4) 1	
Role				0.173
Administration/Other (n=33)	✓ (81.8) 27	✓ (18.2) 6	(0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=15)	✓ (73.3) 11	✓ (13.3) 2	✓ (13.3) 2	
Age				0.771
25-44 years (n=12)	✓ (75.0) 9	✓ (16.7) 2	✓ (8.3) 1	
45-54 years (n=18)	✓ (72.2) 13	✓ (22.2) 4	✓ (5.6) 1	
55+ years (n=17)	✓ (88.2) 15	✓ (11.8) 2	(0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal				0.332
0-5 (n=8)	✓ (75.0) 6	✓ (25.0) 2	(0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=10)	✓ (60.0) 6	✓ (30.0) 3	✓ (10.0) 1	
10-15 (n=12)	✓ (83.3) 10	✓ (16.7) 2	(0.0) 0	
15+ (n=15)	✓ (93.3) 14	✓ (6.7) 1	(0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

#### 4.20.2 Coaching supports my general sense of health and well-being

As this relates to the second research question further analysis is required. Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.20.2. Gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement "Coaching supports my general sense of health and well-being".

Table 4.20. 2 Coaching &amp; health and well-being

	Coaching supports my general sense of health and wellbeing					p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender						0.189
Male (n=19)	✓ (63.2) 12	✓ (21.1) 4	✓ (5.3) 1	✓ (5.3) 1	✓ (5.3) 1	
Female (n=29)	✓ (48.3) 14	✓ (44.8) 13	✓ (6.9) 2	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
Role						0.161
Administration/Other (n=33)	✓ (51.5) 17	✓ (42.4) 14	✓ (6.1) 2	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=15)	✓ (60.0) 9	✓ (20.0) 3	✓ (6.7) 1	✓ (6.7) 1	✓ (6.7) 1	
Age						0.659
25-44 years (n=12)	✓ (41.7) 5	✓ (41.7) 5	(0.0) 0	✓ (8.3) 1	✓ (8.3) 1	
45-54 years (n=18)	✓ (55.6) 10	✓ (33.3) 6	✓ (11.1) 2	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
55+ years (n=17)	✓ (58.8) 10	✓ (35.3) 6	✓ (5.9) 1	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal						0.510
0-5 (n=8)	✓ (62.5) 5	✓ (25.0) 2	✓ (12.5) 1	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=10)	✓ (40.0) 4	✓ (40.0) 4	(0.0) 0	✓ (10.0) 1	✓ (10.0) 1	
10-15 (n=12)	✓ (66.7) 8	✓ (25.0) 3	✓ (8.3) 1	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
15+ (n=15)	✓ (53.3) 8	✓ (46.7) 7	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	

#### 4.20.3 Coaching has helped me with my overall job performance

Leadership coaching and a link to overall job performance and well-being was another core part of research question two. Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.20.3. Gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement “Coaching has helped me with my overall job performance”.



Table 4.20. 3 Coaching & overall job performance

	Coaching has helped me with my overall job performance				p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender					0.877
Male (n=19)	✓ (52.6) 10	✓ (42.1) 8	✓ (5.3) 1	(0.0) 0	
Female (n=29)	✓ (37.9) 11	✓ (51.7) 15	✓ (6.9) 2	✓ (3.4) 1	
Role					0.171
Administration/Other (n=33)	✓ (51.5) 17	✓ (42.4) 14	✓ (6.1) 2	(0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=15)	✓ (26.7) 4	✓ (60.0) 9	✓ (6.7) 1	✓ (6.7) 1	
Age					0.457
25-44 years (n=12)	✓ (41.7) 5	✓ (50.0) 6	✓ (8.3) 1	(0.0) 0	
45-54 years (n=18)	✓ (33.3) 6	✓ (61.1) 11	(0.0) 0	✓ (5.6) 1	
55+ years (n=17)	✓ (52.9) 9	✓ (35.3) 6	✓ (11.8) 2	(0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal					0.092
0-5 (n=8)	✓ (37.5) 3	✓ (62.5) 5	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=10)	✓ (30.0) 3	✓ (60.0) 6	✓ (10.0) 1	(0.0) 0	
10-15 (n=12)	✓ (25.0) 3	✓ (66.7) 8	✓ (8.3) 1	(0.0) 0	
15+ (n=15)	✓ (73.3) 11	✓ (20.0) 3	✓ (6.7) 1	(0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

#### 4.20.4 Principal/Deputy/AP1/AP2 should engage in coaching as part of their self-development as a leader

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.20.4. Based on Fisher's Exact Test, gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement "Principal/Deputy/AP1/AP2 should engage in coaching as part of their self-development as a leader". Interview data supported this claim with the overall theme of while leadership coaching can support the leadership role, it should not be compulsory for novice leaders.

Table 4.20. 4 Requirement for principals to engage in coaching

	Principal/Deputy/AP1/AP2 should engage in coaching as part of their self development as a leader				p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender					0.162
Male (n=19)	✓ (21.1) 4	✓ (63.2) 12	✓ (10.5) 2	✓ (5.3) 1	
Female (n=29)	✓ (44.8) 13	✓ (51.7) 15	✓ (3.4) 1	(0.0) 0	
Role					0.466
Administration/Other (n=33)	✓ (33.3) 11	✓ (60.6) 20	✓ (6.1) 2	(0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=15)	✓ (40.0) 6	✓ (46.7) 7	✓ (6.7) 1	✓ (6.7) 1	
Age					0.397
25-44 years (n=12)	✓ (33.3) 4	✓ (41.7) 5	✓ (16.7) 2	✓ (8.3) 1	
45-54 years (n=18)	✓ (33.3) 6	✓ (66.7) 12	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
55+ years (n=17)	✓ (35.3) 6	✓ (58.8) 10	✓ (5.9) 1	(0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal					0.939
0-5 (n=8)	✓ (37.5) 3	✓ (62.5) 5	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=10)	✓ (30.0) 3	✓ (50.0) 5	✓ (10.0) 1	✓ (10.0) 1	
10-15 (n=12)	✓ (33.3) 4	✓ (66.7) 8	(0.0) 0	(0.0) 0	
15+ (n=15)	✓ (40.0) 6	✓ (53.3) 8	✓ (6.7) 1	(0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

#### 4.21 Benefits to principals of coaching

This section of the survey looked further at the benefits of coaching and is a core part of the research aims and objectives. Further statistical analysis is developed in this section. The purpose of the seven questions in this section was to examine whether or not coaching aided the development of problem solving, self-awareness, reflecting on one's strengths and weaknesses, analysing one's own behaviour, managing conflict and stress reduction. The aims of these questions were to explore the two main research questions in more depth; does leadership coaching impact educational leadership and does it have any impact on the well-being of the leader?

The majority of respondents strongly agreed with the benefits of coaching listed except for "helps reduce stress" (see figure 22). For this benefit, respondents were as likely to agree with it (n=20, 43%) as strongly agree with it (n=19, 41%). One respondent strongly disagreed that it was a benefit of coaching while another disagreed and the remaining five respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Data collected from the interviews

suggest that leadership coaching had some positive impacts on general well-being and stress, with John finding that leadership coaching helped her identify stress;

“I’m able to recognise it a lot more. And you know hopefully dealing with it better”

Fidelma agreed with this finding and felt she was now much better able to not take on other peoples’ stresses through leadership coaching. Nowhere else in the interviews was stress highlighted, however, well-being and building resilience was noted as a benefit of leadership coaching.

Other non-significant factors mentioned under the “other” benefits of coaching were enhanced ability to manage others and to get others to take responsibility for their own decisions, better communication skills including active listening and using effective questioning techniques and a better ability to both manage themselves and their priorities. Some respondents highlighted improved confidence to work with others through self-awareness of both themselves and others and the ability to empower others through coaching techniques. While participants used different words to outline the benefits of coaching, the responses to these statements showed that they were centred around principals’ increased abilities to manage themselves and others, and communicate in a more efficient manner, while improving outcomes for themselves and others (See Appendix 4).

This research has already highlighted the depth of workload a principal/leader has to deal with on a daily basis, and the associated responsibility for all school tasks. One of the main highlights of this research of coaching training has been the ability of principals to use coaching as a means to distribute leadership and the empowerment of others. This ability to delegate to others effectively, and the ability to gently challenge others to take responsibility for their own progress and development and that of the school, is a key skill developed through leadership coaching training which was mentioned by 14 Respondents, and was exemplified by Respondent 33 who stated:

“rather than relying on me to come up with all the answers”

Some respondents highlighted the development of themselves as practitioners, with more confidence (respondents 13,8,19,21,22,23,27,28) to address decision making and in “diffusing difficult situations” (Respondent 8). Amanda believes that coaching has benefited him in the ability of having:

- 1) Confidence in supporting others;
- 2) Structure in making choices (Amanda and Edel);
- 3) Confidence in making plans.

Michelle spoke of the ability of coaching to create a “greater awareness of self” and to “move others into the future, whilst acknowledging the realities of the present.” Respondent 17 called this “watching people grow.” Other skills developed include respondents becoming reflective practitioners at school and at home (3,9,11,26,36), and that techniques developed during the training provided “clarity and positivity” (Michelle).

Respondent 14 confirmed that coaching helped build a culture of inclusiveness and creativity, and that goals can be shared and set out together. Respondent 30 noted the ability to problem solve and enable people solve their own problems and become leaders in their own right, with respondent 35 developing the skills to be “more calm” in communication.

#### **4.21.1 Conflict management/heated issues**

Another emerging theme has been the benefit of coaching skills in managing conflict (respondents 5,7,14,16,28) with respondent 7 stating it helped her to be “better equipped to handle conflict” while respondent 28 experienced greater confidence in engaging with “difficult conversations”. Respondent 35 concurred, stating that coaching skills means that she is “more confident in delegating key tasks.”

Being assertive and dealing with limiting and ill-informed beliefs was another theme, with Edel, and Fred highlighting these points. Amanda spoke of the ability of coaching training to enable others to look at different perspectives and the significance of the impact of others decisions for themselves and those around them, thus helping contribute to the effective management of conflict in schools (see Figure 22).

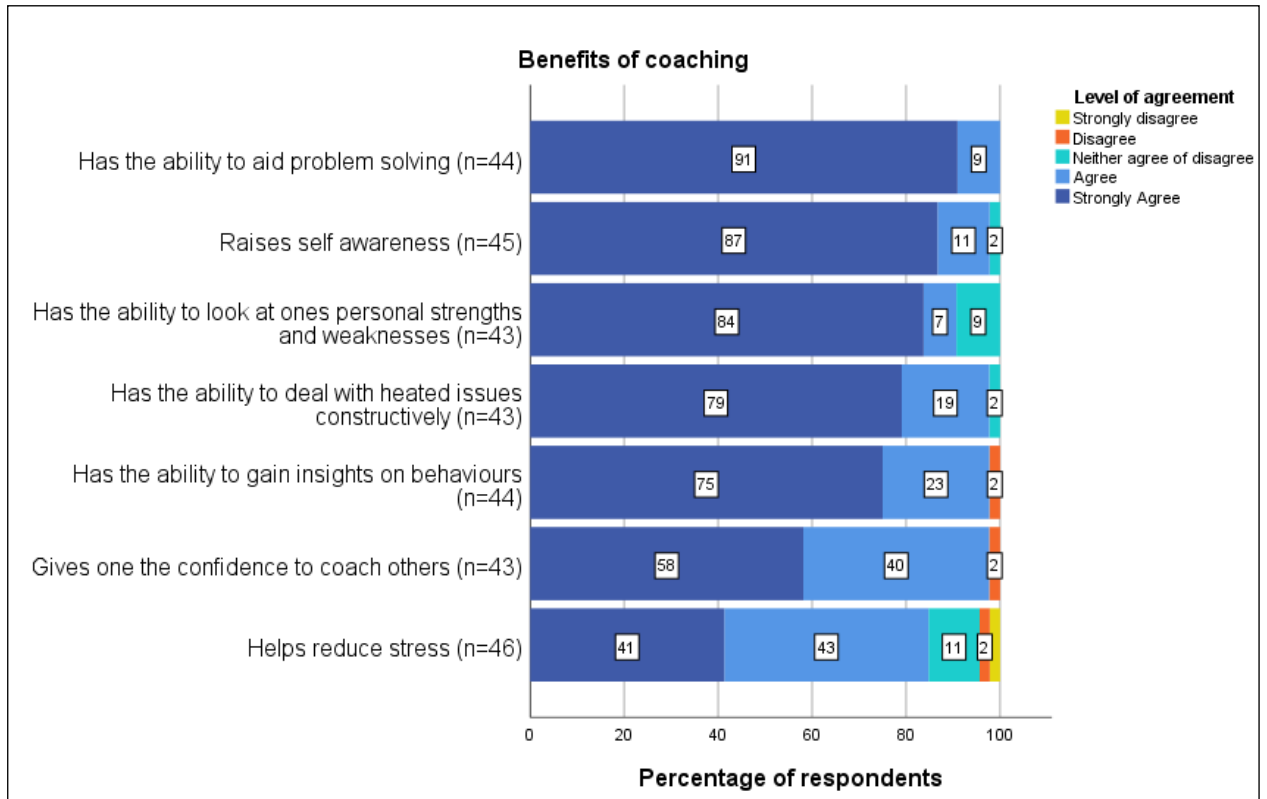


Figure 22 Level of agreement with statements about the benefits of coaching.

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.21.1. A relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.023$ ) at the 5% level, was found between gender and level of agreement with the statement “coaching has the ability to aid problem solving” with female respondents being more likely to strongly agree with the statement. Role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement. This highlights that females found leadership coaching as a support in problem solving more helpful than males did, and that age, principal role and number of years a principal had no significant bearing on the ability to aid problem solving.

Table 4.21.1 1 Coaching and problem solving

	Coaching has the ability to aid problem solving		p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	
	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender			0.023
Male (n=18)	✓ (77.8) 14	✓ (22.2) 4	
Female (n=26)	✓ (100.0) 26	✓ (0.0) 0	
Role			1
Administration/Other (n=30)	✓ (90.0) 27	✓ (10.0) 3	
Teaching (n=14)	✓ (92.9) 13	✓ (7.1) 1	
Age			0.284
25-44 years (n=11)	✓ (90.9) 10	✓ (9.1) 1	
45-54 years (n=17)	✓ (82.4) 14	✓ (17.6) 3	
55+ years (n=15)	✓ (100.0) 15	✓ (0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal			0.201
0-5 (n=7)	✓ (85.7) 6	✓ (14.3) 1	
5-10 (n=8)	✓ (75.0) 6	✓ (25.0) 2	
10-15 (n=12)	✓ (91.7) 11	✓ (8.3) 1	
15+ (n=14)	✓ (100.0) 14	✓ (0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test**4.21.2 Raises self-awareness**

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.21.2. Gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement “coaching raises self-awareness”. For Law (2013) this self-awareness and growth was at the heart of coaching psychology and allowed others take responsibility for themselves and was something that others must also learn.

Table 4.21.1 2 Coaching and self-awareness

	Coaching raises self-awareness			p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender				0.601
Male (n=17)	█ (82.4) 14	█ (11.8) 2	█ (5.9) 1	
Female (n=28)	█ (89.3) 25	█ (10.7) 3	█ (0.0) 0	
Role				0.522
Administration/Other (n=31)	█ (87.1) 27	█ (12.9) 4	█ (0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=14)	█ (85.7) 12	█ (7.1) 1	█ (7.1) 1	
Age				0.379
25-44 years (n=11)	█ (90.9) 10	█ (0.0) 0	█ (9.1) 1	
45-54 years (n=18)	█ (83.3) 15	█ (16.7) 3	█ (0.0) 0	
55+ years (n=15)	█ (86.7) 13	█ (13.3) 2	█ (0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal				0.278
0-5 (n=8)	█ (87.5) 7	█ (12.5) 1	█ (0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=9)	█ (77.8) 7	█ (11.1) 1	█ (11.1) 1	
10-15 (n=11)	█ (81.8) 9	█ (18.2) 2	█ (0.0) 0	
15+ (n=14)	█ (100.0) 14	█ (0.0) 0	█ (0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

### 4.21.3 Personal strengths and weaknesses

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.21.3.1. Gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement “coaching has the ability to look at one’s personal strengths and weaknesses” highlighting that gender, age, role and experience did not impact on the development of one’s personal strengths and weaknesses through the coaching process.

Table 4.21.3 1 Coaching and ability to look at strengths and weaknesses-Fisher's Exact Test

	Coaching has the ability to aid problem solving		p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	
	% (n)	% (n)	
Gender			0.023
Male (n=18)	77.8 (14)	22.2 (4)	
Female (n=26)	100.0 (26)	0.0 (0)	
Role			1
Administration/Other (n=30)	90.0 (27)	10.0 (3)	
Teaching (n=14)	92.9 (13)	7.1 (1)	
Age			0.284
25-44 years (n=11)	90.9 (10)	9.1 (1)	
45-54 years (n=17)	82.4 (14)	17.6 (3)	
55+ years (n=15)	100.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	
Number of years as a school principal			0.201
0-5 (n=7)	85.7 (6)	14.3 (1)	
5-10 (n=8)	75.0 (6)	25.0 (2)	
10-15 (n=12)	91.7 (11)	8.3 (1)	
15+ (n=14)	100.0 (14)	0.0 (0)	

#### 4.21.4 Dealing with conflict and with heated issues constructively

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.21.4.1. A relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.026$ ) at the 5% level, was found between gender and level of agreement with the statement “coaching has the ability to deal with heated issues constructively” with female respondents being more likely to strongly agree with the statement. This highlights how females found that coaching helped them deal with heated issues more constructively than male colleagues did. Based on Fisher's Exact Test, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement. However, when investigated if there was a monotonic relationship between age and level of agreement and number of years as a principal and level of agreement, the correlation coefficients were medium in magnitude, positive and statistically significant. Spearman's Rho for age and level of agreement was 0.355 ( $p=0.021$ ) indicated that there was stronger agreement for the statement in the older age groups. Similarly, Spearman's Rho for number of years as a principal and level of agreement was 0.314 ( $p=0.048$ ) indicated that



there was stronger agreement for the statement from respondents who were principals for a longer length of time. This demonstrated that age and experience were significant factors with older and more experienced principals finding coaching more of a support when dealing with conflict situations.<sup>2</sup>

Table 4.21.4. 1 Coaching and ability to deal with heated issues (conflict)

	Coaching has the ability to deal with heated issues constructively			p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender				0.026
Male (n=18)	✓ (61.1) 11	✓ (33.3) 6	✓ (5.6) 1	
Female (n=25)	✓ (92.0) 23	✓ (8.0) 2	✓ (0.0) 0	
Role				0.136
Administration/Other (n=29)	✓ (86.2) 25	✓ (13.8) 4	✓ (0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=14)	✓ (64.3) 9	✓ (28.6) 4	✓ (7.1) 1	
Age				0.109
25-44 years (n=11)	✓ (54.5) 6	✓ (36.4) 4	✓ (9.1) 1	
45-54 years (n=17)	✓ (82.4) 14	✓ (17.6) 3	✓ (0.0) 0	
55+ years (n=14)	✓ (92.9) 13	✓ (7.1) 1	✓ (0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal				0.119
0-5 (n=7)	✓ (71.4) 5	✓ (28.6) 2	✓ (0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=8)	✓ (50.0) 4	✓ (37.5) 3	✓ (12.5) 1	
10-15 (n=11)	✓ (90.9) 10	✓ (9.1) 1	✓ (0.0) 0	
15+ (n=14)	✓ (92.9) 13	✓ (7.1) 1	✓ (0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

#### 4.21.5 Gaining insights on behaviours

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.21.5.1. A relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.019$ ) at the 5% level, was found between gender and level of agreement with the statement “coaching has the ability to gain insights on behaviours” with female respondents again being more likely to strongly agree with the statement. Role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement. Gender was again a significant factor on coaching impact with females

<sup>2</sup> (Spearman's Rho is only reported when significant at the 5% level or higher)

finding that coaching has the ability to gain insights on behaviours more so than their male colleagues.

Table 4.21.5. 1 Coaching and insights on behaviours- Fisher's Exact Test

	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	p-value <sup>1</sup>
Gender				0.019
Male (n=18)	✓ (55.6) 10	✓ (38.9) 7	✓ (5.6) 1	
Female (n=26)	✓ (88.5) 23	✓ (11.5) 3	✓ (0.0) 0	
Role				0.309
Administration/Other (n=30)	✓ (73.3) 22	✓ (26.7) 8	✓ (0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=14)	✓ (78.6) 11	✓ (14.3) 2	✓ (7.1) 1	
Age				0.583
25-44 years (n=11)	✓ (63.6) 7	✓ (27.3) 3	✓ (9.1) 1	
45-54 years (n=17)	✓ (82.4) 14	✓ (17.6) 3	✓ (0.0) 0	
55+ years (n=15)	✓ (73.3) 11	✓ (26.7) 4	✓ (0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal				0.552
0-5 (n=7)	✓ (71.4) 5	✓ (28.6) 2	✓ (0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=9)	✓ (55.6) 5	✓ (33.3) 3	✓ (11.1) 1	
10-15 (n=11)	✓ (81.8) 9	✓ (18.2) 2	✓ (0.0) 0	
15+ (n=14)	✓ (85.7) 12	✓ (14.3) 2	✓ (0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

#### 4.21.6 The confidence to coach others

Responses to the question on coaching and confidence to coach others are split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal and are presented in Table 4.21.6.1. Assessing the impact that these variables have on the impact on coaching demonstrated that these factors were not associated with level of agreement with the statement "coaching gives one the confidence to coach others". Gender was not a significant variable in this instance, with further data garnered during the semi-structured interviews suggesting that in some cases principals felt that principals of larger schools, with larger staff numbers, had the opportunity to engage in coaching more frequently, thus achieving more experience and confidence as a result. This was more due to school size than gender. Principals of larger schools often did not have full time teaching duties thus enabling them to engage in coaching more frequently.

Table 4.21.6. 1 Coaching and confidence to coach others

	Coaching gives one the confidence to coach others			p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) (n)	
Gender				0.426
Male (n=18)	✔ (50.0) 9	✔ (44.4) 8	✔ (5.6) 1	
Female (n=25)	✔ (64.0) 16	✔ (36.0) 9	✔ (0.0) 0	
Role				0.171
Administration/Other (n=29)	✔ (65.5) 19	✔ (34.5) 10	✔ (0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=14)	✔ (42.9) 6	✔ (50.0) 7	✔ (7.1) 1	
Age				0.771
25-44 years (n=11)	✔ (54.5) 6	✔ (36.4) 4	✔ (9.1) 1	
45-54 years (n=17)	✔ (58.8) 10	✔ (41.2) 7	✔ (0.0) 0	
55+ years (n=14)	✔ (57.1) 8	✔ (42.9) 6	✔ (0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal				0.647
0-5 (n=7)	✔ (71.4) 5	✔ (28.6) 2	✔ (0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=8)	✔ (37.5) 3	✔ (50.0) 4	✔ (12.5) 1	
10-15 (n=11)	✔ (63.6) 7	✔ (36.4) 4	✔ (0.0) 0	
15+ (n=14)	✔ (64.3) 9	✔ (35.7) 5	✔ (0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

#### 4.21.7 Coaching and stress

Responses to the question split by gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal are presented in Table 4.21.7.1. Gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated with level of agreement with the statement “coaching helps reduce stress”. This highlights the view that these variables were not significant factors of how coaching impacts stress by participants.

Table 4.21.7. 1 Coaching and stress

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	p-value <sup>1</sup>
	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	(%) n	
Gender						0.670
Male (n=18)	✓ (33.3) 6	✓ (50.0) 9	✓ (11.1) 2	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (5.6) 1	
Female (n=28)	✓ (46.4) 13	✓ (39.3) 11	✓ (10.7) 3	✓ (3.6) 1	✓ (0.0) 0	
Role						0.075
Administration/Other (n=32)	✓ (50.0) 16	✓ (37.5) 12	✓ (12.5) 4	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (0.0) 0	
Teaching (n=14)	✓ (21.4) 3	✓ (57.1) 8	✓ (7.1) 1	✓ (7.1) 1	✓ (7.1) 1	
Age						0.165
25-44 years (n=11)	✓ (36.4) 4	✓ (45.5) 5	✓ (9.1) 1	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (9.1) 1	
45-54 years (n=17)	✓ (35.3) 6	✓ (58.8) 10	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (5.9) 1	✓ (0.0) 0	
55+ years (n=17)	✓ (47.1) 8	✓ (29.4) 5	✓ (23.5) 4	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (0.0) 0	
Number of years as a school principal						0.577
0-5 (n=7)	✓ (42.9) 3	✓ (57.1) 4	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (0.0) 0	
5-10 (n=9)	✓ (22.2) 2	✓ (44.4) 4	✓ (22.2) 2	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (11.1) 1	
10-15 (n=12)	✓ (41.7) 5	✓ (33.3) 4	✓ (16.7) 2	✓ (8.3) 1	✓ (0.0) 0	
15+ (n=15)	✓ (60.0) 9	✓ (33.3) 5	✓ (6.7) 1	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (0.0) 0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

#### 4.21.8 Coaching, stress and resilience

This section looked at stress and resilience building, coaching and its relationship to teaching and learning, managing others from a coaching perspective, and possible limits of leadership coaching. For all but two of the statements, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (see Figure 23). Half of the respondents (n=24, 50%) either agreed (n=15), or strongly agreed (n=9), that “not everyone can be coached”, while the majority of respondents (n=45, 90%) either strongly disagreed (n=31), or disagreed (n=12), that they had no interest in engaging in coaching. In the strongly agree and agree options, 98% (n=47) of respondents rated the role of principal as stressful, 93% (n=45) stated that coaching builds resilience, 88% (n=42) stated that coaching helps to deal with stresses of the job and 86% (n=41) cited that coaching helps build the capacity of the in school management team. 82% (n=39) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that coaching supports teaching and learning, with only 4% (n=2) stating that they have no interest in engaging in coaching (this could be explained with a small number of participants changing role/retiring during the process of data gathering with some looking to spend more time coaching privately, with others perhaps deciding to exit coaching in education).

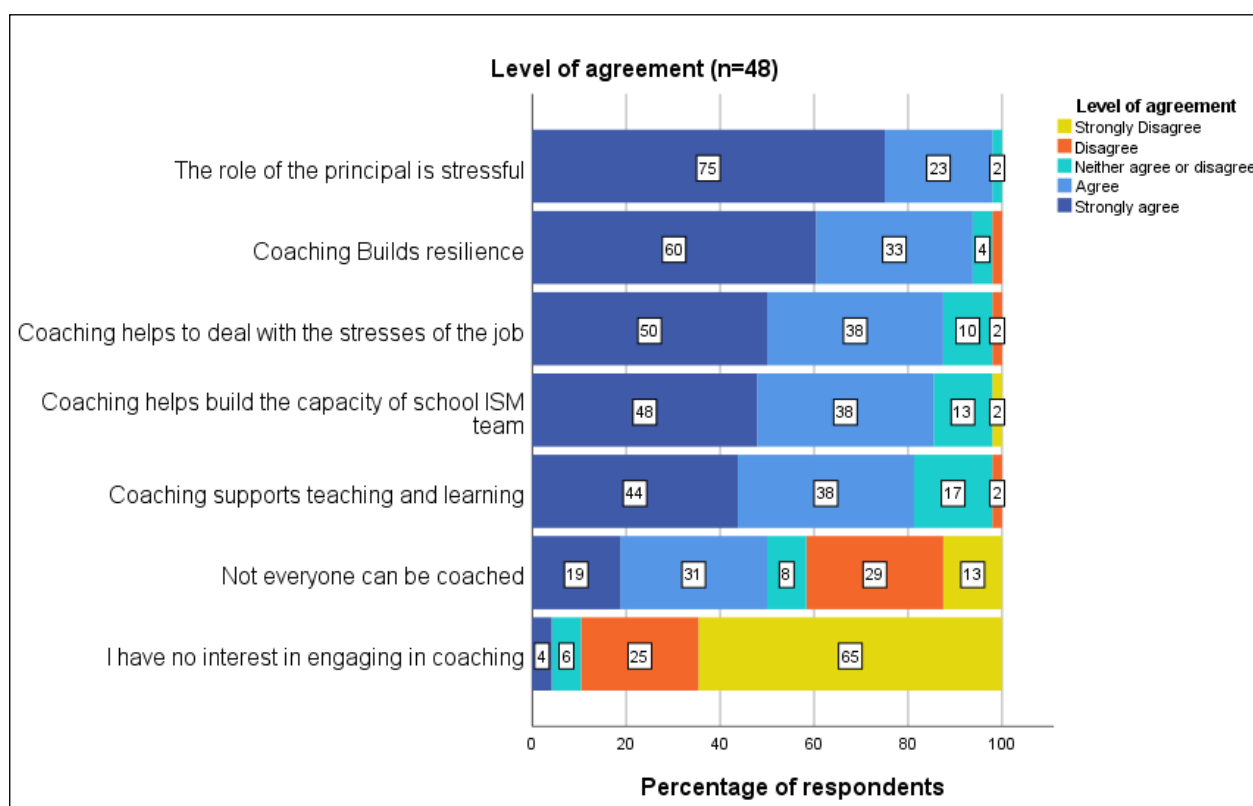


Figure 23 Level of agreement with coaching statements 2.

#### 4.22 Desirability of attributes/skills for coaches

This section examines what respondents consider are the most important considerations for the key skill sets of a leadership coach. Listening skills and personal skills were considered to be the most desirable attributes for a coach (see Figure 24). Suitable qualifications and experience of educational leadership were also considered to be extremely or very desirable by the majority of respondents. Respondents did not consider a qualification in psychology or business experience to be desirable attributes for coaches, with only 6 respondents and 3 respondents respectively, considering them to be extremely or very desirable attributes.

Listening skills were cited throughout the survey as being one of the main benefits of coaching training by respondents, and are very desirable trait for a coach to have, with 97% (n=47) of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing that listening skills were desirable attributes of a coach. Personal skills were also highly rated with 96% (n=46) of respondents citing these as extremely desirable or very desirable. The impact of listening

skills has been summarised earlier in the data analysis and concurs with the data presented above.

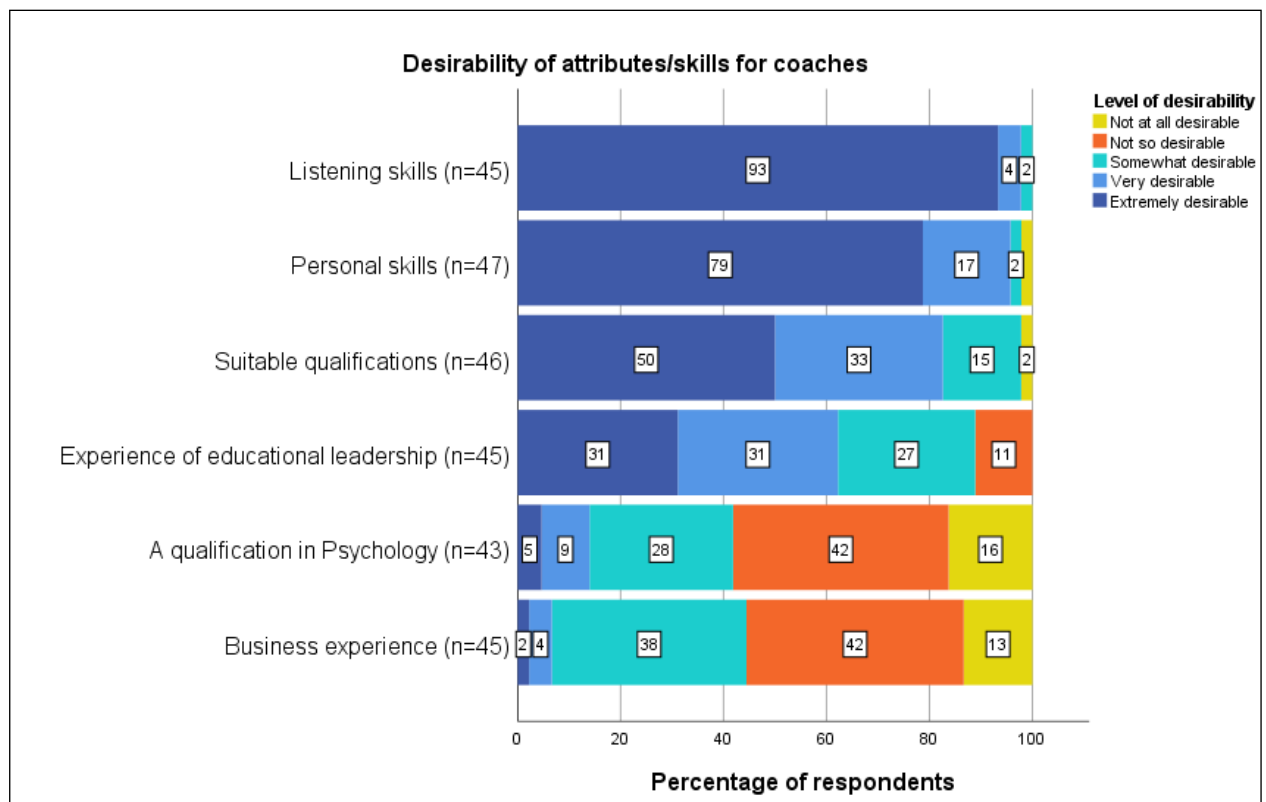


Figure 24 Desirability of attributes/skills for coaches.

In addition to the above presented data the questionnaire contained open ended questions that the respondents were able to comment freely on certain aspects of the questions that may not have been presented in the survey. The findings are presented below:

#### 4.23 Qualitative data from quantitative survey

There are many sources of quantitative data, one of which includes answers to closed questions (Denscombe, 2010). The first stage of this research involved the use of SPSS for the quantitative survey. Thereafter Nvivo was engaged for the analysis of the qualitative interviews which was in turn was used to support stages 3 and 4 of analysis. The following is a summary of the data thematically analysed that was gathered through the

quantitative survey as answers to the open questions and that has not been summarised in the data thus far. This data were acquired under the heading “other” in the survey.

#### **4.23.1 Drawbacks/gaps in coaching**

Some drawbacks and gaps were noted in the coaching process. John felt disappointed with his new acquired coaching skills, as interview panels showed no interest in the coaching process, highlighting the way it has yet to go to be acknowledged as a key leadership skill. This is also supported in the interview data, with many participants highlighting how leadership coaching as a process is still somewhat unknown.

Respondent 27 saw that coaching for children needed to be developed in the future while respondent 28 suggested that the school inspectorate needed to support coaching as an endeavour, as did the PDST. They also highlighted the need for the DES to support research into coaching to provide evidence-based research into its benefits, and not just another initiative (the aim of this research).

Respondent 30 found school so busy that it is hard to have the time to reflect and use coaching as a process, because of being overworked and tired. Respondent 34 highlighted toxic cultures, personality type and reluctance to enter personal relationships as factors that hinder coaching culture in school.

Principals have very little power over staff (respondent 44) and coaching can enable some level of staff motivation; however, some believed that peer coaching was not straight forward with respondent 47 stating she did not think that principals should peer coach. “It will end up just mentoring” while Respondent 47 has had staff who refused to be coached as they felt manipulated. For respondent 48 coaching was not easy when we are normally used to telling people what to do.

Thus far data gathered from the quantitative survey and supported with relevant citings from the semi-structured interviews has been presented. Some of the main findings this far include how leadership coaching has supported the leadership process in schools, developed personal skills of participants and improved their general sense of well-being. In addition, interesting data has been garnered around gender, age, role and school type

which will be further summarised in the findings section. The next section of the data analysis summaries the secondary coding of qualitative data through Nvivo in order to arrive at study themes. This process was outlined in chapter 3 and a summary of the themes identified will be outlined in the next section.

#### **4.24 Secondary coding through Nvivo**

Having performed initial Nvivo coding and deriving categories and sub-categories, a further round of coding through Nvivo was subsequently carried out and supports the chapter conclusion findings. Using secondary coding of the data through Nvivo under the theme of language and emotional coding, further analysis identified language and patterns of words used by respondents through the interview data as a significant theme (Saldaña, 2013). Research carried out by Wilson and Holligan (2013), also used emotional coding when examining performativity and its impact on work related emotions in UK universities in 2013, suggesting that affects and emotions helped understand work life in leadership and management. Interestingly they also suggested that coaching could have a positive impact on leadership, whilst acknowledging the negative effects of performance driven cultures on staff emotional well-being. Aiming to elicit categories of emotional response to changes in the research environment, they established three primary domains allowing the categorisation and development of themes. As this was also the aim of this research and since leadership coaching may have a strong link to emotions, it was a suitable process to follow. An overview of the process carried out in this study was described in chapter 3.10.8.

##### **4.24.1 Themes**

As outlined in Chapter 3 the process of arriving at identified themes was carried out using Saldaña's (2013) manual of coding. The themes emerging were categorised using the theoretical framework that guided the study. Using Bandura's (1978) theory of reciprocal determinism, the framework used concepts of behavioural, environmental and person characteristics of behaviour to categorise the data thematically into a meaningful whole, using descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013). This resulted in a number of initial categories. For Saldaña (2013, p. 48) coding decisions are often based on the paradigm "or theoretical



approach to the study” where often the direct language of participants are used as codes, rather than researcher generated words, and that often the choice of coding method should be determined beforehand to “harmonise with your study’s conceptual framework or paradigm and to enable an analysis that directly answers your research questions and goals” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 49). Based on the theoretical framework that guided the study the following initial categories emerged during the initial coding work with some overlapping the three dimensions of the framework:

**1) Behavioural**

Distributed practice-not rushing in with answers/solving own problems

Managing conflict

Problem solving

Mutual respect/trust/coming from the person

Understanding self

Confidence

Saying NO

Not taking on the issues and problems of others

**2) Environmental**

School culture-coaching implementation

Principal workload

Problem solving

Taking responsibility/coming from the person

Empathy/building rapport/values

Lack of understanding of the coaching process

School size/structure (administrative/teaching principal role)

Neoliberalism and work

### 3) **Personal**

Communication skills:

Effective questioning/listening

Feedback/summarising/listening skills

Empathy/rapport/values/conflict management/respect/trust

Taking responsibility/problem solving/coming from the  
person/understanding self/mind-set/confidence/assertiveness saying no

**Enhanced well-being:** The theme of well-being was also analysed during the data gathering as it related to the original research question. These included understanding self/mindset/confidence/assertiveness/confidence

On secondary analysis and using emotion coding (Saldaña, 2013, pp.86-93), these themes were recoded generating the overarching themes which summarised the overall findings. A summary of the coding process for each theme is presented in table 4.24.1.1. Having concluded the cycles of coding through Nvivo software the following themes were generated:

- 1) Reflective Practice,
- 2) Distribution of Practice,
- 3) Building Leadership Capacity and
- 4) Enhanced Well-being

Table 4.24.1 1 Summary of data analysis using Nvivo**Theme 1 Reflective Practice**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Emotional Coding</b>
<b>Reflective Practice</b>	<b>Personal Skills</b>		<b>CODE</b>	
<b>Framework (Bandura, 1978)</b> Personal		Communication Skills	Body language Language Listening Clarity	
Personal		Active Listening	Listen to listen/respond	<i>think about what was it they really said</i>
Personal		Effective Questioning	Powerful questions/answers/solutions Focus Ownership	<i>Learning to delay your response</i>
Personal		Summarising & Checking Information	Thinking So what you're saying is.... Is that correct? Think (ing)	<i>I would think I would have thought</i>
Personal		Feedback	Reflecting/reflection	<i>I did a lot of reflection on that</i>
	<b>Relationship Building</b>			
Environment Personal		Empathy	Concern Issues Listening Response	<i>I'm probably more empathetic</i>
Environment Personal		Building Rapport	Understand(ing) Consider Aware(ness)	<i>It's actually understanding I'm very aware of</i>
Personal		Values	Concerns Recognise	<i>I would need a sense of</i>
Personal Behaviour		Conflict Management	Open door Body language Conscious of	<i>I am more conscious of</i>

The theme of reflective practice was derived from the category of personal skills and relationship building skills. These emerged from codes that were generated in previous cycles of coding which started with cycle 1 (coding). In cycle 2 (categorising) sub categories of communication skills, active listening, effective questioning, summarising, feedback, empathy, building rapport, values and conflict management were generated. The final cycle of coding generated the two categories of personal and relationship skills with confirmation of the generated theme coming from the emotional coding process. The process was guided by Bandura's (1978) theory of reciprocal determinism where personal, environmental and behavioural traits impact each other in a mutual cycle.

*(The influencing trait of the framework triad is presented in blue. Categories are presented in orange, themes in yellow and codes are grey. The red denotes coding for emotional coding).*

## Theme 2 Distribution of Practice

Theme	Category	Sub-category	Code	Emotional Coding
<b><u>Distribution of Practice</u></b>	<b>Delegation</b>		<b>CODE</b>	
Framework (Bandura, 1978)		Taking Responsibility	Whereas now I... Instead	You owning the responsibility Take ownership of
Environment Personal				
Personal Behaviour		Problem solving	Relationship Time Fix	you're listening and questioning and probing
Personal		Questions to think and reflect	Taking responsibility Imposed ISM Busy Workload Duties Posts	It gives you time to consider  It makes you stop and think Intuition
Environment	<b>Creating an Environment of Responsibility</b>	Principals workload	Not having all the answers (Principal) You are also responsible	getting them to try and explore what could you possibly do here?
Personal Behaviour		Solving own problems	Own decision making GROW	<i>Learning to delay your response Giving people the freedom to make their own decision</i>

The second theme of distribution of practice derived from the two categories of delegation and creating an environment of responsibility. This delegation reflected issues back to the coachee in order for them to self-reflect, take action and solve their own problems. These were influenced by the sub categories of taking responsibility, problem solving, reflective questions to enable others and the impact of principals' workload and other members of staff needing to take responsibility and solve problems. This theme reflected a change of practice where normally principals tend to problem solve and own issues, whereas the new method of working through leadership coaching, enabled other staff members to self-solve problems and issues. The same cycle of coding was used as in theme 1.

### Theme 3 Building leadership capacity

Theme	Category	Sub-category	Code	Emotional Coding
<b>Building leadership capacity</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>		<b>CODE</b>	
Framework (Bandura, 1978)  Environment Personal Behaviour		School Culture	Relationships Dialogue Listening Questioning Involved Engaged Skills Time Scaling	<i>you're listening and questioning and probing</i>
Personal Behaviour Personal	<b>Leaders in their own right</b>	Mutual respect	Decision making Conversation(s) Overload	<i>I believe</i>
Personal		Trust	Solve Ownership	<i>I learned I didn't ever think of that</i>
Environment Behaviour Person		Coming from the person	Problems Freedom Tease out Relief	<i>Help people tease things out</i>

Theme three developing leadership capacity was derived from coding the sub categories of school culture, mutual respect, trust and coming from the person, with codes demonstrating the impact that leadership coaching has had on the role of Principal. Principals using a coaching approach to leadership began to empower and delegate through consensus, using a coaching model that required respect, trust and motivation with the coachee. By creating a school culture of dialogue through involvement, delegated decision making and building relationships, principals were enabled to build leadership capacity throughout the school. The same cycle of coding was used as in theme 1.



### Theme 4 Enhanced well-being.

Theme	Category	Sub-category	Code	Emotional Coding
<b>Enhanced Well-being</b>	<b>Doing a good job/self actualisation</b>		<b>CODE</b>	
Framework (Bandura, 1978)  Personal Behaviour		Understanding self	Time Overload Accountability Better Unhealthy Personal vs professional life Worries Renewed energy	<i>I would think more carefully about</i>  <i>How am I behaving here</i>
Personal		Mindset	Reframing Solve Worries	<i>new mindset for Irish education-distributed leadership</i>
Personal Behaviour		Confidence	Response	<i>I believe</i>
Environment Behaviour Person		Saying No	Workload Slow/slow down Unhealthy Enabling Everything	<i>Slow down to notice</i>  <i>no</i>
Personal Behaviour		Not taking on other people issues	Stress Response Problems Issues Time	

Theme four enhanced well-being was derived from the category of job/self-actualisation with principals recording that leadership coaching developed them as practitioners to enable them feel they were doing a good job. The sub-categories of understanding themselves as leaders, having an appropriate mind-set and the confidence to do their job better as leaders was developed during coaching training. Principals developed skills in building leadership capacity that allowed them say no, not take on issues and problems of others, but instead coach others to solve their own problems in the process. The same cycle of coding was used as in theme 1.

#### **4.24.2 Summary**

The analysis of the qualitative data enhanced further the findings from the quantitative survey responses and supported the development of the themes that were identified. The first theme identified from the data analysis was the theme of reflective practice. While active listening and effective questioning are also skills that have been developed and have been coded in the preliminary coding process, the language used by participants pointed to a behaviour that is reflective in nature using such language as “thinking; thought; learned; noticed; aware of; reflection on; teasing out; balancing.” These reflective activities have been coded under the overarching theme of reflective practice (personal skills on Banduras (1978) model) as presented in table 4.24.1.1.

“Supporters of reflective practice say that developing skills can harness the learning in everyday practice as in critical moments, aiding personal development improving skills”. (Hargreaves and Page, 2013 p.9).

Leadership coaching is therefore a reflective practice activity, one where participants critically evaluate their thinking, slow their thought process and come up with more prudent decision making through this reflection. This concurs with the work of Lynch et al., (2012) who state “a strong case can be made that students should be taught how to change their pattern of thinking so that they can know not only how to respond to and solve (externally sourced) problems but also to frame problems themselves. They need this partly to guide their learning in between or to prepare for teacher assessments but

equally as part of their progressive journey into self-assessment and at more advanced levels, as a key skill for professional life” (p. 181).

The second theme of distribution of practice emerged from analysing the data which followed on from the reflective practice of theme 1. This subsequently supported leadership development and built leadership capacity, with coachees being encouraged to take responsibility for their own decisions, solve their own problems (also coded under the preliminary coding process) supporting a model of distributed leadership (behavioural change/environmental, Bandura’s 1978 model) the third theme that emerged from the study. This theme supported the emergence of theme three, building leadership capacity. Through empowerment and building a school culture and developing leaders in their own right through theme two, this enabled the building of leadership capacity in schools. The final theme of enhancing well-being was a subsequent finding from the previous themes and validated through both methods of data analysis.

#### **4.25 Summary of the main findings**

The main findings of this research suggest that leadership coaching was deemed to be an important leadership responsibility by participants and respondents of this study, second to only teaching and learning. Participants who embarked on a leadership coaching qualification were driven primarily by the desire for personal development, with some specifying that the development of their leadership skills was also a motivator. Only half of the participants were funded to study the programme (some partially) with others not viewing the fees as a deterrent, but stressing that funding should be available for such programmes by leadership staff. 71% of participants agreed that coaching had impacted their effectiveness as school leaders with a significant impact of leaders now able to draw out solutions to problems presented by others and resulting in a more distributed model of leadership, where subordinates were enabled to recognise their own self efficacy in taking responsibility for their own actions. Student achievement was also noted as being influenced by effective leadership coaching.

#### **4.25.1 Statistical analysis and other findings**

Statistical analysis was carried out using Fisher's Exact Test and Spearman's Rho and identifying significant correlations between variables. Some interesting highlights from the statistical analysis show:

##### **4.25.1.1 Gender**

Demographics of age, gender, experience, and role had no impact on the impact of coaching for participants generally, however gender showed some strong correlations in certain survey questions. Firstly, men were no more likely than women to have completed a Diploma in coaching. However, their motivations for taking up a leadership coaching course were different, with a relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.002$ ) at the 5% level, found between gender and the level of importance of personal development as a reason for taking a formal qualification in coaching, with female respondents more likely to consider personal development to be "very important". Age was not a significant factor.

When looking at personal skills, gender differences demonstrated significant findings. A relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.023$ ) at the 5% level, was found between gender and problem solving through coaching, with females finding this more effective. Age, role, and experience had no statistical significance in problem solving. When it came to managing conflict and heated situations and the use of leadership coaching as a support, a relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.026$ ) at the 5% level, was found again with gender, thus females were more likely to agree that coaching supported managing conflict. The other attributes of age, experience and role did not have a strong link to conflict. However, when applying Spearman's Rho for age, this indicated that older age groups and those who had many years of experience, did find that leadership coaching helped deal with conflict ( $p=0.021$ ). Another significant statistical outcome was that females found coaching had helped gain insight into the behaviour of others, more than their male colleagues did ( $p=0.019$ ). The final gender difference noted was a statistically significant relationship ( $p=0.046$ ) at the 5% level found between gender and level of agreement with the statement "leadership coaching has

improved my general sense of well-being” with male respondents being more likely to disagree with the statement.

This section outlined how for females, certain aspects of leadership coaching were perceived as more beneficial to them, particularly around personal skills such as conflict resolution, heated issues and with different motivations for taking up the course.

#### **4.25.1.2 Leadership**

For participants of this leadership coaching programme, teaching and learning were the most important duties of leadership with 92% of participants rating it as a very important activity with the needs of the child at the core. While 56% of respondents had full time teaching duties it is still viewed as a very important activity. In addition, 77% of respondents rated motivating pupil as important ahead of managing resources. 82% (n=39) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that coaching supports teaching and learning.

85% of participants enrolled on the leadership coaching course for personal development reasons with 90% of participants aiming to develop their skills as a leader. All participants agreed that their leadership skills have been developed as a result of leadership coaching training, with the demographics of gender, age and experience and whether they were a teaching or administrative school principal not being a significant factor. Interestingly 92% agreed that coaching helped with overall their overall job performance and assisted them in managing conflict. Much interview data cited the development of skills, enabling the distribution of responsibilities, the empowerment of others and the development of their staff as significance benefits of leadership coaching training. 71% strongly agreed that coaching skills developed their effectiveness with staff while 63% agreed it impacted their effectiveness with students. Interestingly, 86% (n=41) of respondents cited that leadership coaching helps build the capacity of the ISM team

The development of personal skills was also a theme that was discovered during this study, in areas such as listening skills, questioning skills, not responding with answers and drawing out from others solutions to their problems cited as key skills developed during

the training. Interestingly over 70% of respondents (n=34, 71%) either agreed (n=26) or strongly agreed (n=8) that they now have the skills to be a competent coach after having graduated with a coaching Diploma

Challenges that emerged during the analysis include 98% (n=47) of respondents rated the role of principal as stressful, 93% (n=45) but stated that coaching helped build resilience, 88% (n=42) and helped to deal with stresses of the job. Building a culture of coaching in schools was also deemed a challenge and for 83% of participants, there is still a lack of awareness of what coaching is, suggesting a lack of training throughout the school setting (75%) as a contributor to this. Time emerged again as a significant issue for what was required to coach effectively with 75% of participants citing time as a major issue to building such a culture with workload (n=18, 40%) particularly curriculum overload (83%) being the issues most often considered to be the most important issues that can affect the successful delivery of coaching for school leaders. While time as an issue was not a significant statistical output for the difference in role, it was presented as a significant issue across both roles, thus the role of teaching principal vs administrative principal was not statistically significant when looking at coaching and its impact. This is significant, as it highlights that the perception of the administrative principal having less of a workload, has not shown to be the case by those in the study. A statistically significant relationship was not found between level of agreement with the statement that time restraints are a main challenge to creating a coaching culture and the role of the respondent ( $p=0.116$ ), demonstrating that regardless of whether one was a teaching principal or administrative principal, time was equally a challenge for creating a coaching culture for both roles. While many teaching principals may see administrative principals as having more time to carry out coaching activities, this research highlights that this is not the case and may suggest that the bigger the school gets, the bigger the workload increases, (the smaller the value of P derived from Fisher's Exact Test the greater the evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis that this is no difference between the groups). The acknowledgement that having to coach a team of 20 staff may be a significant undertaking that a teaching principal of a 2 to 3 teacher school may be able to undertake this task easier, was a

possible reason for this. However, in seeking how leadership coaching can support both roles and the associated workload, 86% (n=41) of respondents cited that leadership coaching helps build the capacity of the ISM team, which is a powerful support for building leadership capacity in schools. One of the main findings from the research was that participants recognised that workload was a big concern for educational leaders, and that it cannot be done alone. Workloads need distribution, and coaching was identified as a key driver for this change. The interview data allowed participants more time to record their views, stressing the importance of using coaching to arrive at a more distributed model of leadership, while building leadership capacity. In supporting the building of the ISM team, 70% of participants agreed that they believed they were now competent to coach others having completed the training programme, but 85% cited a lack of awareness of leadership coaching as being a concern.

When examining the role of stress in educational leadership attributes of age, gender, years of experience and role did not impact on participants' abilities to manage stress, but an acceptance was identified that coaching helped deal with stress in general. This was particularly identified when carrying out the interviews, with participants delving further into how stress impacted them. While this study did not aim to measure stress with any psychological instrument, its link to well-being was highlighted by respondents during the study. It did not emerge as a significant theme during the Nvivo analysis, however workload and time were identified as significant obstacles to the successful delivery of effective coaching programmes in schools, with workload and time constraints often being a stressor for principals.

#### **4.25.1.3 Peer coaching**

Peer coaching was seen as a way to develop coaching into the future, but further data gathered through the interview process presented many caveats. Confidentiality, competence and training and whether a principal could act as coach and subsequently have to discipline a coachee under another aspect of school work being problematic. Peer

coaching was not a gender issue but 77% of participants suggesting it should be supported by the DES with extra administrative days for teaching principals.

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#### **4.25.1.4 CSL support**

CSL offer a coaching support for school principals. While this study examined principals who had undertaken a Diploma in coaching at a more advanced level, data were gathered to assess participants view on the current CSL coaching support model available to all principals. 73.8% of eligible participants had availed themselves of this support with 7 others agreeing to sign up, signifying a good uptake of this service from those who had completed the Diploma in coaching. This finding suggests that the participants who had undertaken a Diploma in coaching saw the value of using the CSL coaching support service, while there is a significant lack of uptake of coaching for principals in general with the current model of coaching. This may be due to a lack of clarity on the support and what it aims to do or a lack of understanding of its merits. Interesting participants of this research would have both knowledge and understanding of the CSL coaching support however data collected during the study suggested more knowledge on coaching as a support needs to be distributed to principals. Further analysis garnered during the study demonstrated that statistically, gender did not present as a reason for attending CSL coaching and neither did role, age or experience. However, a point to note is that participants would have been engaged with peer to peer coaching, role playing coaching and would have been supervised working as a coach up to 100 hours for the duration of the programme. This may have contributed to some participants not engaging with CSL at this point, as they would have been committed to coaching hours outside of the timetabled hours. Noteworthy is the fact that gender and attending CSL coaching was not a finding in the study.

#### **4.25.1.5 Coaching and Mentoring**

The majority of participants were able to identify the difference between mentoring and coaching. Mentoring involved working with a more experienced colleague giving instructions and advice. Coaching was more based on a relationship where the coach did not necessarily need experience in the field of education, but required coaching skills



enabling the coachee to take responsibility for their own decision making, action planning and solving their own problems through coaching skills (active listening, effective questioning aiming to improve performance with responsibility for decision making resting with the coachee).

#### **4.25.1.6 Well-being**

There was a strong link to the second research question of how leadership coaching contributed to leader's well-being. The majority of respondents (n=40, 83%) strongly agreed or agreed that leadership coaching had improved their general sense of well-being. It helped to build resilience, to reframe problems, enhanced assertiveness skills in managing conflict and improved relationships generally. It also helped build the confidence of participants in their role and assisted them in managing their role better. Gender, role, age and number of years as a school principal were not associated factors that impacted this view. However, a significant statistical relationship between gender and well-being was also found, with females seeing coaching as having a bigger impact on well-being than their male counterparts. The majority of respondents strongly agreed with the benefits of coaching listed except for "helps reduce stress" (see Figure 22). For this benefit, respondents were as likely to agree with it (n=20, 43%) as strongly agree with it (n=19, 41%). One respondent strongly disagreed that it was a benefit of coaching while another disagreed and the remaining five respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Data collected from the interviews suggested that leadership coaching had some positive impacts on general well-being and stress, with a small number of participants suggesting that leadership coaching helped them identify stress. However, leadership coaching did help participants not to take on other peoples' stresses (distribution of practice) with well-being and building resilience a benefit of leadership coaching. While a small number of participants expressed divergent views on leadership coaching and well-being, further data collected during the semi structured interview suggested that some conflict in the school setting was impacting their sense of well-being often with a more senior member of staff that made it more difficult to manage.

Evidence has been presented that has provided real insight into how leadership coaching has impacted positively on school principalship, leadership and well-being in Ireland. Examples include such developments, as cited by participant one, that leadership coaching has been a life changer and “I don’t think I’d be able to sustain that (the scope of role) without the coaching,” and by Imelda who stated “the coaching course has improved all areas of my life,” with Imelda and Fred stating that coaching allowed them make life changing decisions, around such significant issues as bullying and life work balance. Not only did evidence come from interviews, but the survey data concurred that leadership coaching had a huge impact, with 83% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing that leadership coaching improved their general sense of well-being. 91% strongly agreed that leadership coaching aided problem solving and helped with conflict management reducing staff conflict and improving staff relations and well-being, while 93% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that leadership coaching was a significant factor in building resilience.

Other participants’ responses that have encapsulated the power of coaching include that of Imelda who recalled how her coaching skills developed during the training allowed her work with a colleague through “a moving moment for me.” Similarly, Fidelma recalled a similar powerful discovery, noting the coaching “potential” and “....I don't have to go away carrying everybody else’s worries and stresses; there is only so much that I can do once I've weighed up all the different options for myself..” Amanda referred to leadership coaching as “a very powerful skill that I’ve learned this year”, with Fred recalling that coaching gave him the ability to “re-frame all problems in both his personal and professional life.” While acknowledging these benefits there are however challenges that remain to building a culture of leadership coaching in schools. Time restraints, school cultures, and training and knowledge of coaching are still major obstacles to its development.

#### **4.26 Chapter Conclusion**

According to the data collected during this research, leadership coaching engaged participants in a range of activities that through further analysis can be identified as a

type of reflective practice. This practice has involved skills of coaching such as active listening, effective questioning and rapport building (personal skills). Through this reflective practice, participants have been able to consider a distribution of practice where coaches have stopped problem solving and taking responsibilities for other peoples' decisions, thus building leadership capacity within the school, a core remit of educational leadership in Ireland since 2016. Those who have availed themselves of coaching training identified in this research, that they have experienced enhanced well-being, as a result of engaging with the coaching process. This cycle of activities is represented in Figure 25 below.



Figure 25 The Impact of Leadership Coaching

Butler, 2019.

Leadership coaching therefore, through employing the specific skills and allowing for the internal and external factors that impact that school, leads to an examination of one's values and beliefs, or a reflection on practice. This can subsequently lead to a distribution of practice, with coachees taking responsibility for problems in their own schools, taking actions and responsibility, which in turn builds leadership capacity, enhances relationships and helps distribute workload. Having carried out this process, leadership coaching as evidenced by the data gathered in this study can enhance a leader's well-being.

The initial research questions presented in this study were: Does leadership coaching psychology impact on leadership, and does it impact well-being? The data gathered in this study suggests that leadership coaching engages and encourages a self-reflective process, which leads to a more distributed workload and enhanced well-being for leaders. These findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **Discussion**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

There were two main research questions at the core of this study.

Does leadership coaching psychology impact the role of school principal/leader?

also

Does leadership coaching psychology have any impact on principal/leader well-being?

The evidence collected through a mixed methods approach was analysed and presented in the preceding chapter. There is strong evidence from the data that leadership coaching does have an impact on the role of school principal, with survey respondents and interview participants agreeing with the core research question that leadership coaching does impact their role positively, with further evidence gathered in the interviews to support this conclusion. Evidence has also been gathered suggesting that leaders have benefited both personally, and in their leadership role from leadership coaching, which has enhanced their perception of their own well-being.

As the study of leadership coaching is a relatively new concept for educational leaders in Ireland, the reality of coaching practice was presented. The aim of the study was to also inform future practice and issues, that may inhibit the successful implementation of leadership coaching in Irish schools. The views of the CSL were collected during the study, as they are core to the delivery of the coaching model in Irish education since 2015.

The aim of this chapter is to present the broader implications of the findings and to draw conclusions from the study as a whole, by presenting how leadership coaching impacts Irish education and the well-being of educational leaders, but also to support and make recommendations about the future direction of leadership coaching in the final chapter. In addition, the significant findings from the research are presented as new knowledge from the research. Thematic headings are presented and discussed citing examples from

the research and with a brief link to some literature. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings and with recommendations for future practice and research presented in chapter six.

It is useful at this point to summarise the conceptual framework that guided the study (presented in the methodology chapter, section 3.8). This framework (Bandura, 1978) while guiding the research, also provided a format from which the findings were categorised, analysed and discussed.

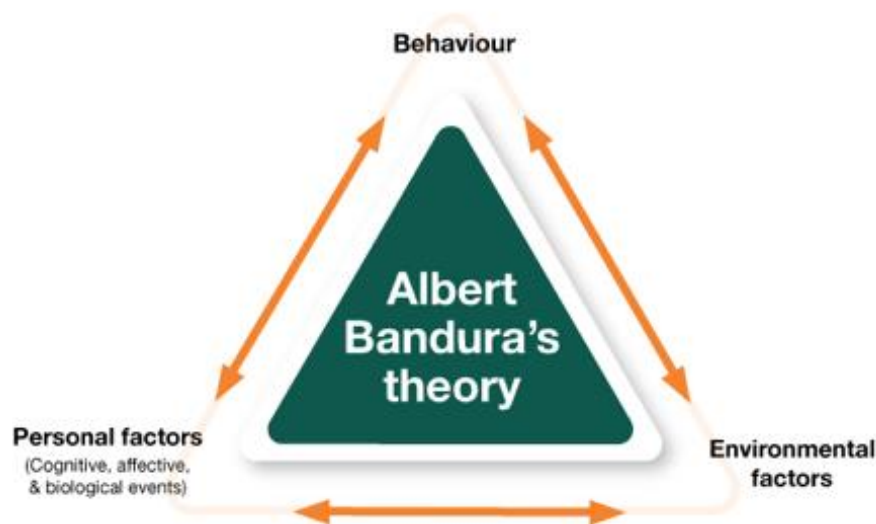


Figure 26 Reciprocal determinism (Zhou and Zhou, 2007, pp.7-8).

Bandura (1978), suggests his model is presented as one of interactionism, in which the three major classes of determinants personal factors, environmental factors and behaviour affect each other. In their day to day transactions people are not simply “reactors to external stimulation” but that behaviour is impacted through “intermediary cognitive processes” (Bandura, 1978, p. 345). Cognitive factors have an impact as does the environment in which one is involved in. People are able to exercise some influence over their behaviour and actions taken by individuals have the potential to change their environment and in turn their behaviour (Bandura, 1978). Thus Individual principals will have different personal factors such as biology, cognitive understandings and beliefs,

different environmental factors such as background, school context and culture, which in turn influences their behaviour and their subsequent approach to leadership coaching.

A pragmatist paradigm framed this mixed methods study. Pragmatism arises out of actions, situations and outcomes and is based on the premise of proving solutions to problems (Flugum, 2018). Leadership coaching has a similar premise, as it also aims to provide solutions to leadership challenges. The pragmatic paradigm provides an opportunity for multiple methods and different worldviews, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis in a mixed methods study (Creswell, 2003). Its flexibility and the context of the study suited the chosen approach to this research.

With the data extracted from both methods, it was concluded that both the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews are “complimentary” with the data from the survey being complimented further by the in-depth interviews (Kelle and Erzberger, 2004). Triangulation of the two approaches of this mixed methods study, has demonstrated that the interview data not only complemented the survey data, but with participants presenting deeper insight into answers obtained through the survey data supporting the data collected during the surveys. The interviews allowed that deeper exploration to aid understanding by the researcher and showed consistent responses with the survey data.

## **5.2 Research themes**

The following themes were derived from the findings of the data:

- Leadership coaching as a reflective practitioner activity and impact on leadership
- Leadership coaching and distribution of practice leading to a model of distributed leadership
- Leadership coaching and building leadership capacity
- Leadership coaching and leader well-being

Data were also collected that will both support and inform the CSL and DES about the future direction of leadership coaching under areas such as:

- Peer coaching

- Coaching and future training
- Challenges to creating a coaching culture such as time required, training and the skillset required and why the one-to-one coaching support with the CSL is not being utilised
- The role of the support services in creating a culture of coaching in schools
- Gender issues
- Tensions arising from the data collection

Each of these themes will be discussed in the following sections

### **5.2.1 Leadership coaching as a reflective practitioner activity and impact on leadership**

Coaching as a leadership endeavour promoted reflective practice through the themes identified in this research, such as effective listening, effective questioning, taking responsibility for one's own actions and looking inwards for answers in an ever changing complex world. This was also supported in the literature review with many authors who cited the benefits of reflection (Hargreaves and Page, 2013).

“Reflection asks you regularly to stop and think about what you are doing and why? The focus is on not only your own feelings, but also the effect that you have on the people you are responsible for and your fellow colleagues” (Hargreaves and Page, 2013, p. 18).

Data collected during this research emphasised how coaching supported how we can harness our individual and our collective potential in order to support leadership practice in schools with coaching going to the ‘heart of how we manage both ourselves and others’ (Law, 2013, p. x). Participants of this research developed in self-awareness of their own leadership style and on their ability to manage and lead others in a much more empowered way, emphasising that others reflect on their practice but more so take responsibility for themselves and their decisions which was noted by many of the participants. This is a view supported in the literature that others need ‘to take responsibility for themselves and others must learn’ (Law, 2013, p. xi). This awareness starts with the process of self-reflection which was a dominant theme in this study.



According to Bandura (1978, p351) “through their capacity to manipulate symbols and to engage in reflective practice thought for innovative action, they (people) can generate novel ideas and fashion new environments for themselves and others” which was very evident from the data collected in this research.

A new summary model is thus presented below in figure 27 and aims to represent the main findings of this research. This development of activities is presented with the various stages of leadership coaching as a process garnered through this study, with the core themes of reflective practice, distribution of practice, building leadership capacity and enhanced well-being being identified in the research through Nvivo and supported through the data gathered in the survey and analysed using SPSS. The process, practice and outputs of leadership coaching are presented in an overview of findings:

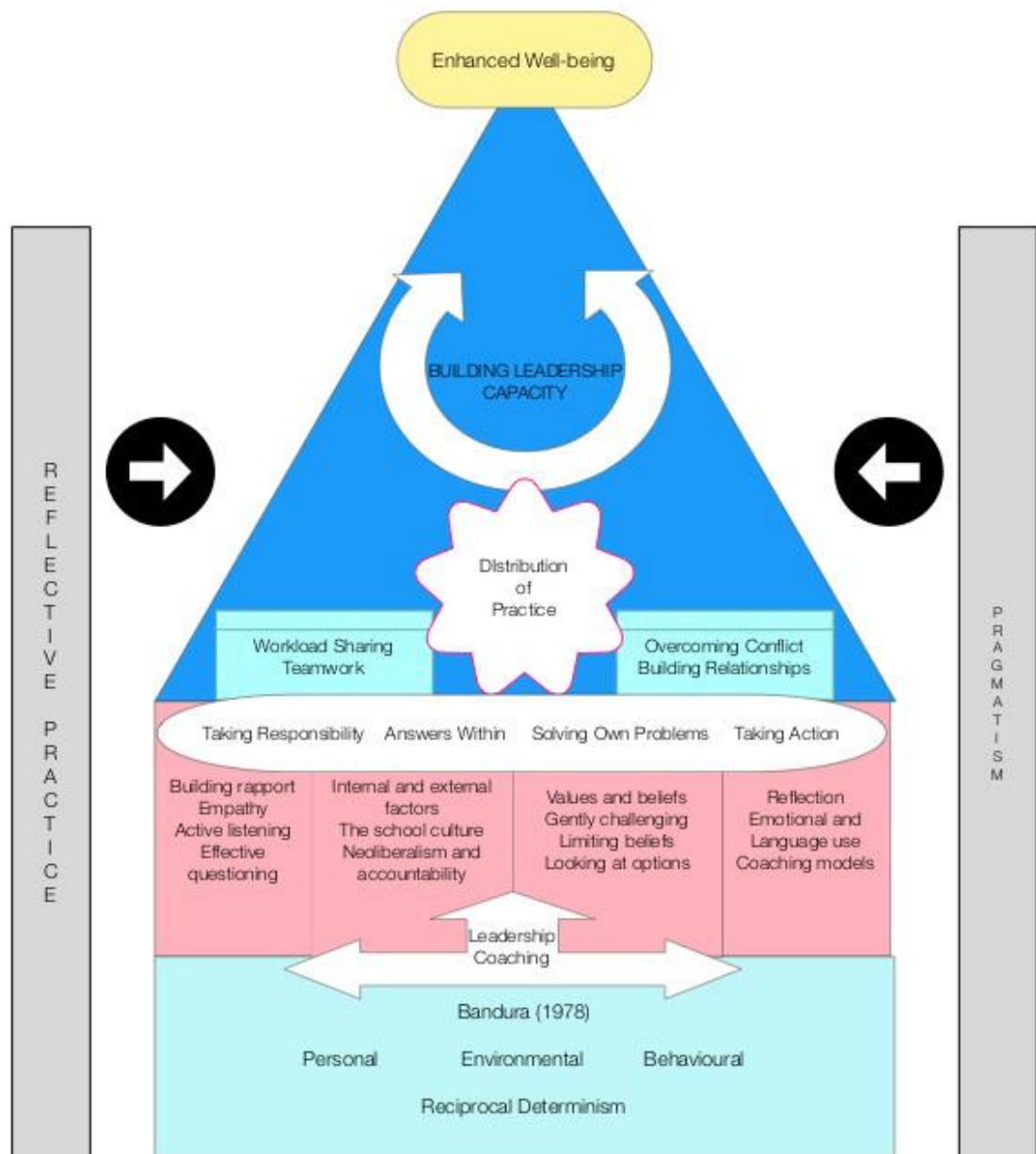


Figure 27 Overview of Findings Butler, 2019.

Figure 27 depicts the process that underpinned this research project. Using Bandura's (1978) framework of reciprocal determinism, the behavioural traits of personal, behavioural and environmental influences were used to inform what impacts behaviour around the experience of leadership coaching. Coaching skills such as building rapport, empathy and using skills developed such as active listening and questioning, were developed during the coaching process, as highlighted by research participants. The ability to use these skills were influenced by environmental factors both of an internal and external basis, such as school culture and the neoliberal and accountability requirements of being a school principal in 2020. Wilson and Holligan (2013), recognised how performativity and neoliberalism can make people feel disillusioned and distressed at times and can restrict their freedom of thought and action. While this may be true, Bandura (1978) suggested that because peoples' conceptions, their behaviour and their environment are reciprocal determinants of each other, individuals are neither powerless objects controlled by the environment in which they find themselves, nor entirely free agents that can do whatever they please. Suggesting the need for safeguards and controls in organisations, such neoliberal aspects of leadership today are both an essential requirement and a form of accountability. However, leadership coaching provides a mind-set that helps to manage these challenges and whilst not allowing total freedom to do whatever one wants, coaching participants cited that leadership coaching helped them manage the neoliberal aspects of the role of principal. It also developed their cognitive skills, their reflective skills and their leadership skills in order to stop over reacting to school events and neoliberalist demands.

The overarching theme of the reflective practice process of leadership coaching, allowed the challenging of beliefs and values (cognition) and through effective emotional language and supported by coaching models, to challenge the thinking of the teacher being coached. The success of leadership coaching was also challenged or assisted by the values and beliefs of those teachers being coached, and the ability of both the coach and coachee to consider their willingness to look at options for improvement.

This part of the process led to a distribution of practice, with participants now beginning to consider, for possibly the first time, that they may have the answers to their questions and issues within themselves, a premise of what makes leadership coaching successful (Peltier, 2010; Beere and Broughton, 2013). Allowing the teachers/coachees to take responsibility for their own decisions and to take action from within, promoted a distribution of practice that contributed to building leadership capacity, workload sharing and shared practice, thus reducing conflict and improving teamwork. Coaches highlighted how this subsequently led to participants having a better feeling of well-being (for both the coach/principal and coachee/teacher), thus impacting positively on the teaching and learning of the school.

This evidence concurred with the works of Kegan and Lahey, (2009) and Fillery-Travis and Lane, (2006), who highlighted that leadership coaching psychology has emerged in recent years as a tool to develop leaders and staff, using self-reflective work practices to enable personal development. Saporito, (1996) in his four step coaching process highlighted the analytical aspect of successful leadership coaching before implementation of a plan while Aguilar (2013), states that coaching encourages collaborative and reflective practice with Beere and Broughton (2013), suggesting that this was the aim of any effective teacher. Through such self-reflection comes a type of self-discovery (Chase, 2018), which in turn can help coachees understand their issues much better. This research highlighted the value of the reflective process of leadership coaching and how coaches can arrive at a distribution of practice, whereby teachers begin to look inwards towards a solution to problem solving, rather than bring it to the principal to solve. Through this process, coachees took responsibility for their own development, through consensus, rather than distributed leadership alone, which can often lead to conflict. Whereas traditionally teachers presenting with problems sought a solution externally, leadership coaching changed this practice towards an internal solution and forces a self-reflective process, thereby empowering the teacher/coachee.

A factor that enabled this reflective process was the use of effective listening and questioning and emotional language (Saldaña, 2013), designed to support reflection.

Table 4.15.1 highlighted the language used by participants when self-reflecting on their coaching skills that contributed to a reflective process such as “I am more aware of” and “it makes you stop and think” or “learning to delay your responses” or “take ownership of”, all highlighting the many perceptions of reflective thought on coaching as a process. One participant stated “giving people the freedom to make their own decision” as a breakthrough for a school principal to allow this to happen. This type of language was highlighted in the research as an important support to the distributed practice that enables a teacher to consider solutions to their own dilemmas. This will be discussed in the next section.

### **5.2.2 Leadership coaching and distribution of practice (distributed leadership).**

The theme of leadership coaching as a distribution of practice was highlighted during this research, with leaders now using skills developed, such as effective questioning and active listening skills to enable the development of staff to take responsibility for their own decision making and problems solving. Peltier (2010) and Beere and Broughton (2013), also suggest that through effective coaching skills, staff are enabled to discover that they have the answers to their own dilemmas, provided they look inwards and reflect on their practice. The coaching skills developed on the training programme, and the use of various models and frameworks, have created a skill set for educational leaders to now help distribute practice throughout the organisation. This empowerment (Page and De Haan, 2014), helped develop leadership capacity within the school, and hold people responsible (Chase, 2018). Mc Govern (2015) noted that all these theories of leadership action do not necessarily translate into a leadership at practice level and that it needs a culture of collegial respect and mutual trust for it to work. Leadership coaching can support an environment where trust can be built and collegial respect can be enhanced, thus providing the grounds for a more distributed model of leadership through the relationship part of coaching, which has been cited as an important part of coaching success through this research. While distributed leadership aims to provide a solution to an enhanced workload for school management and particularly principals, it does not provide the how of doing so. Distributed leadership is often dependent on the principals’ perceptions of

leadership and school practice and is often promoted to justify leadership and power over others, more than working with teachers to adjust and improve their practice (Amels et al., (2020).

Acknowledging that distributed leadership aims for collaboration and relationships, its success is often dependent on the skills of the principal. As identified in this study, leadership coaching on the other hand is a collaborative process, where principals improve their practice through leadership coaching skills and are enabled to develop the skills of leadership teams and develop intrinsic motivators of their teams. Even where organisations offer environmental inducements, they often fail to motivate or make others responsible (Bandura, 1978), which is why the data collected in this study suggested that such things as empowerment, autonomy and problem solving from within develop staff much more successfully.

For the participants of this research, leadership coaching provided a type of existentialism for problem solving. For example, Amanda, after leadership coaching training suggested she would never tell anyone what she thought anymore, but would be seeking to “tease” out ideas that would have to “come from the other person.” It was also interesting to note that 91% of respondents strongly agreed that leadership coaching had the ability to aid problem solving, with the other 9% agreeing (no one disagreed with this statement). Edel also criticised the belief that principals should always have the answers to problems suggesting a need to “curb” that thought process, so as to be able to enable others, while Imelda through leadership coaching enabled a teacher to self-solve a problem, and was thanked for solving the problem, despite her comments to her teacher that actually “no, you solved it yourself”. Other participants concurred that leadership coaching had contributed to this distribution of practice with Betty highlighting the change of “dialogue” she was now having with staff. Overall, 14 respondents suggested that leadership coaching almost allowed them to not have all the answers, and the relief this gave them from the previous situation of everyone relying on them as principals to have all the answers to all the problems. Leadership coaching, therefore, paused this thought process, and gave permission to principals to reflect back to the teacher, an action that

not only allowed the teacher reflect, take responsibility, take action and move forward, it also built their sense of well-being.

In some cases, participants understood that sometimes staff were not coming for an answer at all, but were coming for a listening ear, some empathy or, as Amanda put it, just someone who “listens to me.” Thus, another important learning experience from this research in leadership coaching was not only to not provide all the answers, but to sometimes just listen, without looking for answers at all. Either way, however, leadership coaching provided a framework in which to engage conversation, with some participants of this research finding a framework, whether it be to just listen (skills that were developed) or coach to action (reflection through to taking responsibility) useful.

For Amanda leadership coaching provided a structure for making such choices, and she enjoyed watching people grow as a result. Respondent 30 suggested that this process of teachers solving their own problems allowed not only a calmer communication system, since you were allowing people make their own decisions through guidance rather than telling them what to do, but it also made them become “leaders in their own right” thus building leadership capacity. This theme of building leadership capacity will be discussed in the next section.

### **5.2.3 Leadership coaching and building leadership capacity**

Since 2016 the DES have cited that one of the responsibilities of a school leader is developing leadership capacity. That work culminated in the publication of a document in 2016 titled “Looking at our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post/Primary Schools”. Gross (2018), stressed the importance of this aspect of a leader’s role and how it can enhance the organisation, and aids student achievement. Similarly, Aguilar (2013) argued that leadership coaching was an essential part of this development of leadership capacity.

The findings in this study reflect that building leadership capacity is one of the key advantages of leadership coaching, through the empowerment of others to take responsibility. The premise of coaching is that coachees have the answers within (Peltier,

2010), and participants of this research also concurred that coaching had developed their skill sets as leaders, allowing them to gently challenge others and developing them to take responsibility for their own problems and issues. Participants in interviews cited the ability of leadership coaching to get others to take responsibility at school, with 92% of survey participants either strongly agreeing or agreeing that leadership coaching helped their overall job performance. 98% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that leadership coaching gave them the confidence to coach others, which presents leadership coaching as a great foundation to build leadership capacity. Data collected and represented in appendix 4, highlighted that some of the benefits of leadership coaching for principals were the ability to get others to take responsibility for their own decisions, and confidence building techniques to empower others through effective communication, thus improving outcomes for themselves and others, a leadership capacity building approach. Bandura (1978, p. 350) suggested that when people are motivated through self-satisfaction or aiming for certain personal accomplishments, they “expend the effort needed to attain the desired performance” which is a core remit of building leadership capacity and at the core aim of leadership coaching.

Through this research, the building of leadership capacity has also enabled principals to use coaching skills to help teachers reflect on their practice and find answers to their own problems, thus enabling a sense of self responsibility in staff. 92% of survey respondents highlighted teaching and learning as the most important role of a school leader, and the research demonstrates that by empowering others through a coaching process, this has supported the building of leadership capacity, which has in turn enhanced teaching and learning in schools. Imelda suggests principals as coaches need to “inspire staff” and “motivate staff” which enables them to be the best teachers they can be. 86% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that leadership coaching contributed to building the ISM school team capacity, a significant contributor to teaching and learning.

Other researchers who have examined this aspect of creating leaders through distributed leadership are McHugh (2015), who similarly asserts that it is a huge mistake for principals to try and do everything themselves. Through his research, he was able to gather data



from schools who were implementing a model of distributed leadership thereby “giving people responsibility, accepting that they will make mistakes and they won’t be perfect” (Mc Hugh, 2015, p. 113) and acknowledging that successful principals of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are enhanced by others exercising leadership of their own volition. Referencing participants from his research, McHugh (2015) noted the enabling of teachers through “empowerment”, and suggesting that this type of leadership and management is both “desirable and practical from team building points of view” (Mc Hugh, 2015, p. 105). Most importantly, one participant of the research notes that “people grow (when they are) offered or provided with opportunities”.....“Seeing them delivering that day to the rest of the staff gave me a great high” (Mc Hugh, 2015, p. 105). This research also suggests the enhancement of leader’s well-being, through a distributed practice of leadership (this will be discussed in section 5.2.4).

The need to build leadership capacity “recognises the need to devolve duties among all members of the school community, in order to promote leadership experience and alleviate the burden of responsibility historically placed on the shoulders of individual principals” (Mc Govern, 2015, P. 25). This was recognised by participants of this study who sought to use their leadership coaching skills to empower others, distribute workload and build leadership capacity cognisant of the Looking at Our School (2016) guidelines. While it is important to note that distributed leadership may be viewed as a positive practice in educational leadership, it is not the panacea for all problems (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998), and it takes time and practice to get it right.

While there are bodies of research highlighting the advantages of distributed leadership and building leadership capacity, they do not address an approach as to how this could be done effectively. This study helped fill that gap in knowledge, as leadership coaching was a means to help deliver a cooperative approach to distributed leadership. The use of effective coaching techniques allowed teachers to be empowered to step up to their potential as leaders in their schools.

#### **5.2.4 Leadership coaching and leader well-being**

There are many challenges associated with the role of the school principal in today's world (Klocko and Wells, 2015), with workload and stress often resulting in an unhealthy lifestyle for those in the role. Coaching significantly enhances goal attainment, resilience and workplace well-being by reducing stress and depression, in both organisations and educational settings (Grant, 2009). Coaching reduces stress (Gyllensten and Palmer, 2005) and enhances the lives of participants (Bowles and Picano, 2006). There is no doubt that the future sustainability of leaders in education will require personal aspects of well-being and wellness and this can be delivered through an effective coaching relationship (Earley, 2020).

This research has acknowledged the emotions people experience around leadership coaching. The research findings in this study indicated that leadership coaching has had a positive impact on leader well-being with numerous participants acknowledging how leadership coaching had impacted their well-being positively. Coaching “makes me feel I’m doing a good job, ... which adds to my own sense of well-being” (Amanda).

Leadership coaching in this study created a self- understanding (as coded under categories in Nvivo) for participants enabling them to see their own performances examined internally rather than what Bandura (1978, p. 350) refers to as “external factors”.

83% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that leadership coaching had improved their own well-being. In addition, a relationship which was statistically significant ( $p=0.046$ ) at the 5% level, was found between gender and level of agreement with the statement “leadership coaching has improved my general sense of well-being” with male respondents being more likely to disagree with the statement. However, the semi-structured interviews further supported this point with participants citing an enhancement of their own well-being through a feeling of self-efficacy and satisfaction that they were doing a good job by utilising their leadership coaching skills. Peltier (2010) provided a possible solution as to why females found leadership coaching supported their wellbeing more than males, with the proposal that for males, coaching is a type of *macho*

endeavour, as opposed to psychotherapy or counselling, which was associated with weakness and inadequacy.

Participants of the research also acknowledged the development of themselves as practitioners during the coaching process, with a better understanding of self throughout. This had enabled participants to recognise that they don't need to have to have all the answers, and that by giving people time through listening and questioning, they were able to build the leadership capacities of others, and not have to take on all the responsibilities of a school leader alone. Others found this change of mind-set to be very worthwhile, as it was enabling others and distributing leadership while building leadership capacity. The idea of others owning responsibility was something that leaders who have undertaken coaching training realised enhanced their own well-being, and that of those they were developing. One participant cited an increase in confidence, ambition and improved relationships as a benefit of coaching training, with most suggesting that leadership coaching helped them identify stressors and deal with them in a better way. Michelle described it as the "coming of the dance floor onto the balcony", allowing that reflective overview. Mary also summarised the benefit of not feeling like the principal had to solve everything, and that it was ok not to always have the answer stating "no; you are responsible" and advancing the idea that the teacher could also be a leader. This contributed to her own well-being, as she became comfortable with saying she didn't always have the answer and that others needed to step up and also to provide answers. This new way of leadership involved a distribution of practice and a new approach to leadership.

However, challenges to well-being were also discovered through this research. Time was a major concern for both coaches and coachees, with workload and time to reflect and coach an issue for most participants. There was also a belief that coaching as a new endeavour was not recognised throughout the education profession, and that staff should know more about coaching as a capacity building endeavour, from such support services as the inspectorate (who generally don't encourage leaders to engage in coaching), the DES (who need to allow time for it to develop, embed it and raise its

awareness) and the PDST, who need to support it further. It was also noted that the DES needed to recognise that the well-being of the students will only be developed when the well-being of the school leaders and staff are prioritised. This concurred with the work of Sadlar and Galdames, (2018), who stated that the role of the school principal has become very challenging and stressful in recent years, with workload, stress and isolation concerning factors and that the need to build good well-being practices are important developments for school principals in order to lead the school community.

Hence greater attention needs to be given to individual leaders' personal development, their well-being and the development of personal qualities to operate in the demanding conditions of educational leadership, particularly with the high-stake accountability of today (Earley, 2020). While Bandura (1978) cited the need for institutional mechanisms or safeguards, principals have come to terms with the heightened expectations and increased accountability of the role in recent years. However, they do require reflective opportunities such as working with a coach, with coaching being the most powerful basis for such reflection in not alone helping build resilience, but helping deal with such issues as workload and well-being (Earley, 2020). Despite these challenges, participants of this research acknowledged a greater sense of their own well-being and of those teachers that they coached, signifying a strong link between leadership coaching and well-being.

#### **5.2.5 Peer coaching**

Peer coaching was also a theme that was highlighted during the data collection phase. While there were many perceived concerns regarding peer coaching in education highlighted in this study (trust, competence, training, relationship issues) there can also be many benefits. Acknowledging the fact that principals have an accountability relationship with teachers and staff, a dual role of both 'boss' and 'coach' may appear incompatible. However, for Schermuly and Graßmann (2019), the relationship between the coach and coachee was a core factor influencing the impact of coaching, suggesting that social exchange theory has long postulated that the negative effects of coaching and mentoring are 'regular components of close relationships' (p. 40). These relationship dynamics can also be associated with many close relationships such as mentoring,

psychotherapy and supervision. Thus the benefits of peer coaching in education may still be a viable consideration for the CSL to promote with the understanding that social exchange theory will impact its success, a factor not associated exclusively to the accountability function of the principal with the teacher. Creating a culture of coaching in a school environment would require that teachers also understand the dual role of principal as 'boss' and as 'coach' and that difficulties that arise in the role of the coach/coachee relationship may not be a factor associated with the accountability role as principal and teacher alone. Research from social psychology shows that dyadic relationships are complex offering both negative and positive experiences, an integral component of close relationships (Schermuly and Graßmann, 2019). In order to successfully create a coaching culture in school this understanding needs to be understood by all participants who agree to participate in a coaching relationship.

#### **5.2.6 Gender issues**

'Male power is embedded within organisational structures' (Lynch, 2014, p. 8)

Finally, there were some notable differences in responses to some questions based on gender within this study. An influential factor in evaluating participant responses is often that of managerialism in education. In educational management there is an expectation that you will be available 24/7, a lifestyle that advantages a carefree man or woman (Lynch, 2014) This does not always suit working parents with the care burden often not distributed equally. Lynch (2010) cited the importance of caring work, work that needed to be rewarded and distributed equally between women and men in particular with inequality sometimes evident where the burdens and pleasures of care and love work are unequally distributed in society, particularly between women and men. This may account for some of the differences in responses.

In addition, a further explanation for differing responses is cited by Berkovick and Eyal (2015, p. 135) who states females sometimes feel emotional stress and negative impacts when they move from a 'feminine teaching culture into leadership roles with a masculine, technical, rationalistic administrative culture.' They also cited the emotional stress

associated with the care aspect of their role and that they had a perceived abandonment of their care role when faced with external competition in educational leadership roles. Their study also highlighted the negative emotions associated with neoliberal policies and the masculine rationale orientated discourse that dominates the management field with evidence that marginalised the feminine emotion orientated discourse.

### **5.2.7 Tensions from the data**

Finally, in this section various tensions highlighted during the data collection phase will be highlighted.

#### **5.2.7.1 Culture challenges**

Data gathered during this research suggested that principals need to be able to enable a culture that supports leadership coaching. In the 2016 document looking at our school the DES suggested that leaders promote collaboration, a culture of improvement, communication and develop responsibility and accountability within their school. Feedback from the thematic analysis and emotional coding of this research suggested creating a culture of coaching requires a number of leadership's aspects to be addressed within the school before any coaching culture could be considered.

These leadership aspects include schools needing to have a culture of dialogue and involvement, delegated decision-making, the capacity to build effective relationships, and the capacity to build leadership capacity within their school before a culture of coaching can be embedded. This included the ability for principals to empower their staff and create a model of distributed leadership within the school.

Of course not everyone will want to engage in coaching with this research drawing on some of Bandura's (1978) theory of reciprocal determinism, namely that personal factors such as personality, unwillingness to look internally or to be willing to address one's own issues as an obstacle in developing such a culture. This was mentioned by respondents 14, 30, 34 and was also highlighted as an issue in some of the interview data. Consistent with Peltier (2010), this research also suggested that there may be a leadership skill set

deficit in order to create a coaching culture at schools with principals attempting to create a coaching culture having attended a short coaching skills program that often does not give them sufficient skill set in order to implement a fully workable coaching environment in their schools.

Many participants cited the issue of time and workload and particular issues such as the moratorium and posts of responsibility which were impacting the ability to create a coaching culture in school with Mary, Amanda and John, highlighting the impact of excess workload and time as an issue in developing coaching at schools. In addition, 83% of Participants believed that there was a lack of awareness of what coaching really was throughout the school system. These were factors that would impact the successful implementation of a coaching culture.

This chapter presented a summary discussion of the main themes identified through the data analysis. The final chapter will present the key contributions, limitations, recommendations and future research recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Conclusions**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The concluding chapter commences with an overview of the thesis, assessing the answers to the main research questions, and outlining the implications and contributions of the main findings. Following on from this, the chapter evaluates the limitations of the thesis, provides some recommendations on the basis of the findings, outlines some possible future research opportunities, and considers how to maximise the impact of the study through dissemination activities.

#### **6.2 Overview of the Dissertation**

This study set out to explore the impact of leadership coaching on Irish school principals. The first step in the study explored the related literature on leadership coaching initially outlining the impact of neoliberalism and its impact on leadership in general. This was developed to explore the major themes in leadership coaching at both private and public sector, before looking at it from an educational leadership perspective. The review ended by examining the challenges to leadership coaching.

The two main research questions were

- How does leadership coaching psychology impact on the role of school principal?
- How does leadership coaching psychology impact on a principal's well-being?

To answer this question Bandura's (1978) theory of reciprocal reciprocity was used as a behavioural framework to guide the study, which focused on the personal, environmental and behavioural traits, designed to understand how one's behavior is impacted by personal and environmental factors and vice versa in a triadic relationship. As the study aimed to assess the impact of leadership coaching psychology and its impact, this was a suitable means to approach the study.



Data were gathered through a mixed methods approach using both quantitative methods (survey) and qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews). Data from the survey (n=48) were summarised and responses were analysed. Descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated, and various statistical techniques were utilized, such as Fisher's Exact Test and Spearman's Rho, to identify correlations and significant findings in line with comparable statistical analyses in the social sciences. The significance level for the tests used in this study was set at 5%. Follow up semi-structured interviews were carried out (n=12) and transcripts were coded using Nvivo to generate themes from the study.

### **6.3 Key Contributions and Implications**

The study constitutes a significant addition to the generic body of knowledge on leadership coaching and additionally it constitutes a major addition to the Irish leadership landscape, including the work of the IPPN and the CSL.

Overall the results indicated that leadership coaching enhanced the personal skills of participants in such areas as listening skills, effective questioning skills and being able to draw out from others solutions to their own problems (reflective practice). Results revealed that participants were better skilled to manage conflict, manage stress and enable the empowerment of others (build leadership capacity). The findings also discovered that leadership coaching enabled a change of practice with principals enabling others through their leadership coaching skills to self-problem solve, become more responsible for their own outcome and feel more motivated in their role (distribution of practice). These process meant that principals felt better about their own role as they were both motivating others and distrusting leadership thus enhancing their own well-being and that of the teachers (enhanced well-being).

While most participants undertook the course for personal reasons, 71% strongly agreed that their coaching skills allowed them to be more effective with staff, with 63% of participants stating it also allowed them to be more effective with students. Furthermore, over 70% of respondents (n=34, 71%) either agreed (n=26) or strongly agreed (n=8) that

they now have the skills to be a competent coach after having graduated with a coaching Diploma. Not surprisingly age and post-retirement planning as motivation for doing the course had a strong relationship with older participants citing post retirement planning as a key motivator. It could be argued that that this may be because the skills of leadership coaching are quite marketable post retirement in educational leadership consulting.

In terms of developing their well-being, 98% (n=47) of respondents thought that the role of principal was stressful, but 93% (n=45) stated that coaching helped them to build resilience, with 88% (n=42) stating that coaching helped them to deal with the stresses of the job. Moreover 86% (n=41) cited that coaching helped build the capacity of the in school management team and 82% (n=39) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that coaching supported teaching and learning in the school. Results revealed through the semi-structured interviews also cited similar findings with participants acknowledging how leadership coaching developed their personal skills, while also building the leadership capacity of others. Citing such aspects as reframing, assertiveness skills, self-confidence and an improved self-efficacy, leadership coaching contributed to their overall sense of well-being and doing a good job. By contrast participants did not agree that coaching reduced stress, but it did help them manage it better with a change of practice that helped them not to take on the stresses of others cited my many.

Results revealed that gender was a significant factor in many of the research questions. While men were more likely to enrol on the course than women, women were more motivated by personal reasons for doing so. Furthermore, women more-so identified with leadership coaching improving their sense of well-being than men. Women also felt that leadership coaching helped them manage conflict better, problem solve issues better and manage conflict better. They also felt leadership coaching helped them gain insight on the behaviours of others better. By contrast gender was not related to either the future of peer coaching or the uptake of the CSL coaching support.

A finding most relevant to the Irish landscape was that regardless of whether one was a teaching principal or administrative principal, time was equally a challenge for creating a coaching culture for both roles and no relationship was noted between both roles throughout the study. It could be argued that while in bigger schools the principal has no teaching duties, the significant increase in staff and pupil numbers and building responsibilities creates an extra workload not associated with a smaller two teacher school. However, despite the differences in roles, 82% of participants agreed that leadership coaching supports teaching and learning in schools.

Finally, this study initially outlined the neoliberal challenges of workload for principals today. This study suggests that leadership coaching helps principals deal with the neoliberal challenges of the role. While principals are not free to ignore the challenges presented, leadership coaching helped develop a change of mind-set that enabled principals manage these challenges better, through building leadership capacity, distributing practice (responsibility for one's own problems) and the development of personal skills. It also developed their cognitive skills, their reflective skills and their leadership skills in order to stop reacting to school events and neoliberalist demands. Most participants felt competent to coach others having received the training with the findings revealing that 79% either strongly agreed or agreed that leadership coaching helped them manage the neoliberal aspects of the role.

There are several important implications of this study for educational leaders involved in leadership coaching. Firstly, leadership coaching can support principals in their reflective practice. Furthermore, it can help principals to build the leadership capacity of their schools and support distributed leadership. Finally, leadership coaching can enhance the well-being of both themselves and the teachers that they manage, while providing a worthwhile personal development experience. While this research has outlined the benefits and impact of leadership coaching, there are limitations to all studies. These will be outlined in the next section.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the Thesis**

In retrospect it is evident that this thesis has limitations. Firstly, in terms of methods adopted there are some limitations. For e.g. the use of self-report scales to measure variables might result in bias. Secondly this research was aimed at a certain cohort of school leaders only and did not gather the generic views of school principals on leadership coaching. The rationale for this approach was guided by evidence from the literature on what constitutes sufficient training for practice change. Dewitt (2018) suggests a minimum level of training in order for participants to have the ability and confidence to implement what they have learnt from coaching training and the researcher concurred with this view. Hence this research was carried out using a mixed methods approach with school principals who had completed the required course in leadership coaching, consisting of a number of core modules, followed by 100 hours of peer to peer coaching, with appropriate coaching supervision. For Dewitt (2018), it is necessary to have evidence that an approach works, in this case the academic rigour of the programme with both modules and practice, and then seeing an improvement in practice (which is at the core of this research) (Dewitt, 2018, p.43). Participants of this research also required experience of a leadership role at the minimum of principal level. In Ireland there are three levels of principal role, assistant principal, deputy principal and principal whom normally constitute the in school management team (ISM) in the school. The course also allowed participants the opportunity of completing an application to register their 100 hours of coaching practice with a coaching organisation such as the EMCC or the ICF. This research, therefore, did not examine the impact of coaching that may be taking place in schools, where a module in coaching may have been undertaken by a school leader or as part of a Masters or postgraduate degree programme. It was the view of this researcher that in order to ensure validity of the research, a higher level of competence in coaching was required. Thus further research could be carried out with leaders who have undertaken courses of less duration and commitment, to assess the impact of such coaching training in schools.

Other limitations of the research include the fact that, due to the nature of this study, it was relatively small in size. Even though the research was carried out nationwide, through every school in Ireland and through the support of the IPPN and the CSL, the numbers of eligible participants was limited to an estimated 54 possible graduates of leadership coaching. Despite this, 48 respondents completed the survey, with a further 12 agreeing to participate in in-depth interviews. The research data gathered, represents all known educational leaders who have completed the required leadership coaching training course, as was its aim. It thus represents a view of leadership coaching from a cohort of principal leaders who are qualified coaches, and not the general view of principals who may have a different opinion on leadership coaching from a different perspective. However, in spite of its limitations the study resulted in robust findings, which encourage the researcher to make several recommendations in the next section.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

Based on the results of the study, several recommendations are offered to policy makers and stakeholders in education in order to improve the impact of leadership coaching.

- 1) The DES need to offer fully paid training courses in leadership coaching and release time for principals to avail themselves of such a qualification awarded by a relevant body/university if they wish to embed leadership coaching into the culture of schools. Consistent with Peltier (2010), this research also suggested that there may be a leadership skill set deficit in order to create a coaching culture at schools with principals attempting to create a coaching culture having attended a short coaching skills program that often does not give them sufficient skill set in order to implement a fully workable coaching environment in their schools.
- 2) This research has demonstrated how leadership coaching can support reflective practice, empower staff through a change of practice, and build leadership capacity in schools. This process not only improves teaching and learning but can improve the well-being of both teachers and principals. Principal teachers should be supported to avail of the CSL leadership coaching

through enhanced supports such as extra administrative leave for teaching principals to be used for CSL coaching specifically. If this was supported by the DES and CSL it would help deliver a significant improvement in the building of a culture of coaching at principal level.

- 3) Time was the biggest factor inhibiting coaching in schools, with leaders reporting the lack of time available to embed a coaching culture. This is also supported by Mc Govern (2015), who, when referencing coaching, referred to time as “an absent commodity when it comes to developing leadership potential” (Mc Govern, 2015, p.209). Time needs to be allocated to both teachers and teaching principals to carry out the duty of staff/teacher coaching.
- 4) The support services, PDST and NCSE, need to build awareness of the coaching process through staff in schools.
- 5) The Inspectorate need to build an awareness of coaching within school management, and recommend it as a leadership building support when carrying out whole school evaluations (WSE) and incidental visits.
- 6) Interview boards need to recognise what coaching has to offer in schools, and recognise the potential of qualifications in coaching in their application process.
- 7) Regardless of whether one was a teaching principal or administrative principal, time was equally a challenge for creating a coaching culture for both roles during this research. While many teaching principals may see administrative principals as having more time to carry out coaching activities, this research highlighted that this was not the case, and may suggest that the bigger the school gets, the bigger the workload increases. Creating a culture of coaching in a large school would require extra support, as the school principal would not be able to manage the associated workload of coaching large numbers of staff alone, while continuing to lead teaching and learning. This may require an ISM coaching training model/team coaching approach to coaching in schools.

- 8) The uptake of one-to-one coaching with the CSL has been poor. Data gathered during this research highlighted a lack of awareness around leadership coaching, and also the time commitment required to carry it out. The lack of endorsement by support services and the inspectorate also contribute to a suspicion of its merits. The DES need to communicate the advantages and support of coaching as a process, with the allowance of administrative days (for teaching principals) to avail themselves of one-to-one coaching and grant permission by administrative/teaching principals to attend CSL coaching during school time.
- 9) In addition, this research has demonstrated that leadership coaching is a means to help deliver a cooperative approach to distributed leadership. The use of effective coaching techniques allowed teachers to be empowered to step up to their potential as leaders in their schools. Leadership coaching needs to be understood in educational policy as a very useful means of building leadership capacity, through engagement rather than delegation. Future amendments to SSE policy and Looking at our School 2016 updates should emphasise to school staff coaching as a model of leadership.
- 10) There is much diversity of practice in the coaching world, with practising coaches coming from many different backgrounds and with an array of experiences. Hence there is a wider recommendation that government need to provide legislation in respect to the regulation of the industry, with possible sub-sets of coaching attributes recognised by governing bodies, so that the public can credibly access coaching support, knowing it is regulated and accountable.
- 11) Future training on coaching needs to address the neo-liberal discourse that may contribute to a neo-liberal culture. Instead training needs to equip Principals with the skills to approach coaching from a more holistic viewpoint, aimed at the total development of the individual.
- 12) Building a culture of leadership coaching is quite a challenge for principals with some often suffering from burnout, stress and ill-health, therefore it is

essential that any approach taken to creating a culture of leadership coaching supports the well-being of the principal in order to make this a sustainable option. This was a finding from the data collected in this study and literature highlighted during this research, with Chandler et al., (2011) suggesting that leadership coaching can only take place where participants and leaders have some type of coaching culture that may take shape in a formal arrangement such as formal appraisal, something that has yet to be introduced in Irish education. Formal staff appraisals are recommended as a coaching opportunity.

- 13) The CSL need to be aware of the performance driven culture associated with coaching and ensure that the well-being of staff is promoted within any coaching structure for schools, a recommendation also suggested by Wilson and Holligan (2013).
- 14) Education of the process of coaching is needed in order to enable a culture of change. This includes the training of teachers in what coaching leadership entails.

## **6.6 Future research**

There are a number of further research opportunities that have been highlighted by the research undertaken for this dissertation as follows:

One of the issues highlighted during this research project was that at present there is no compulsory leadership course required in order to become a school principal and that although there is a course for future leaders, taking the course is not a requirement for promotion to a leadership role. This can often lead to a dysfunctional perception in leadership training as to what collaborative leadership looks like, with some leadership courses very focussed on leadership theory, with little practical application of coaching skills or tools.



This research has highlighted some significant contributions that leadership coaching, as a leadership skill, can contribute to education in Ireland in 2020. This research was limited to those leaders who had completed an approved Diploma in leadership coaching (and associated QQI recognised professional coaching component at level 6), as it was necessary to ensure adequate skills and theory had been developed by those who participated in the research. Participants of this research were also required to have a leadership role, as principal/assistant principal role or higher in their school environment. No other course in leadership was examined during the study, although many courses available to leaders appear to have very little, if any, leadership coaching content or practice. In order for leadership coaching to be consolidated and embedded into the Irish educational landscape, the following future research areas are proposed:

- 1) Research into those principals who have availed themselves of the one-to-one coaching service through the CSL could be investigated, in the light of its new offering in the education sector, and would provide a unique insight into the impacting factors of leadership coaching in schools.
- 2) Peer coaching needs further investigative study. Although data from this research generally favours this model, there were some caveats noted in the interview data concerning suitability, confidentiality, trust, time required to carry out the coaching process and, most importantly, sufficient training for those who would be involved in peer tutoring to ensure adequate standards. Further study into potential developments, or a model of peer coaching, could be developed in the future. Interestingly, 81% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that peer coaching was a way to develop coaching, with the interview data highlighting confidentiality, training, staff trust and role ambiguity as concerns. Extra administrative support days were also (77% strongly agreed or agreed) a requirement, while some participants preferred an external coach. While literature points to the success of external coaching, there is limited research available on the assessment of internal coaching as a system in education.

- 3) Team coaching is a new model of coaching that has recently been made available to school principals who have had at least seven coaching sessions with the CSL, as a means of developing the leadership capacity of the whole school particularly the in school management team (ISM). Further investigation into the merits of this approach could be carried out.
- 4) The future direction of research should focus on what makes some people more open or receptive to coaching, including the importance of looking at internal coaches, and what attributes, skills and qualifications, if any, are instrumental in the success of coaches.

## **6.7 Dissemination**

The dissemination of the research results is an important step to maximise the use of the research results, therefore, it should be properly disseminated. Writing up this dissertation is among the ways of disseminating the research results, even though it is mainly written as a requirement for an academic degree. Research is conducted to find out valuable contributions to knowledge; to disseminate these contributions is the responsibility of the researcher.

At a local level, digital and printed copies of the dissertation will be available on the digital repository of Lincoln University and at the library. At a national level, a digital copy of the dissertation will be made available to the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) and the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN). Moreover, the researcher has been invited to disseminate and present the findings to the CSL. It is envisaged that the researcher will disseminate the findings of the research and write a research paper for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. Also, a conference presentation will be prepared to be presented at a conference of Principals in Ireland.

However, the findings of the study can be used to create an effective environment for leadership coaching in education and guide the implementation of policy education. The end users of the findings are educational leaders in Ireland who can benefit from its

findings. To disseminate the findings, steps will be taken to raise the awareness of the end users regarding the potential of leadership coaching for school leaders.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

As the primary researcher of this study, the author obtained a deep insight into the professional lives of school principals, the challenges they face, and the supports they need to assist them. The author was astonished by the level of commitment demonstrated by school leaders in Ireland today, who give so much of their personal time to develop themselves as practitioners, in order to support their team of teachers and students in school. 2020 is a demanding time for the role of school leader, and the participants of this study generously donated their time to assist this research.

I wish to acknowledge their time and participation in allowing me into their lives, both professionally and personally, to investigate my passion for leadership coaching and its potential for change in schools. The principals I witnessed during this time have demonstrated a courageous and selfless giving of themselves to the role, despite the acknowledgement that they felt they “were always on call.” Fortunately, this did not deter them from always attempting to do the right thing, often hiding their personal difficulties, while seeking support to enhance their professional calling as school principals.

While many challenges have been highlighted in the study, there is an overwhelmingly positive response to leadership coaching as a support system, with participants often citing the development of themselves as individuals, before professional engagement of the skills developed. As Fidelma puts it:

“The coaching course has improved all areas of my life, because you can’t look at any area in isolation and so if you improve one area, you’re automatically improving all the areas and so it allowed me as a professional to look after my personal life as part of my professional development.”

For Gavin (2018), coaching from a leadership perspective is about “growing and developing” and as leaders in 2020, surely this is the only way to be a leader for the future. Despite the challenges of leadership, coaching can provide a useful support for the school leader in 2020, and beyond. As Spence et al., (2019, p.128) state:

“At its best coaching uses a structured yet flexible question framework to help clients think for themselves without interference. Ultimately coaches seek to develop self-sufficiency in their clients, so that they can think and act more independently (and interdependently) and move towards outcomes of individual and/or collective significance. This can happen when clients are part of a cycle of deep learning about self, others and the world, which a well-trained coach can facilitate through the use of incisive questions, active listening, ongoing encouragement to generate (and trial) their own solutions, and by challenging self-limiting beliefs that might create an immunity to change and stall ongoing development and growth”

The two research questions that guided this study were; How does leadership coaching psychology impact the role of school principal? Also, how does it impact their well-being?

Evidence has been presented in chapters four and five, which provide real insight into how leadership coaching has impacted positively on the role of school principal and well-being in Ireland. Examples were provided around sustainability in the role without the support of leadership coaching, with others citing how leadership coaching has changed both their private and professional life. Other respondents were enabled to make life changing decisions on such areas as bullying and work life with an overwhelming response (83%) from respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing that leadership coaching improved their general sense of well-being. 91% strongly agreed that leadership coaching aided problem solving and helped with conflict management reducing staff conflict and improving staff relations and well-being, while 93% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that leadership coaching was a significant factor in building resilience. These findings concurred with qualitative data collected and Nvivo coding suggesting leadership

coaching helped develop personal skills when dealing with conflict and staff problem solving.

Other participants' responses that have encapsulated the power of coaching included the coaching "potential." Data collected in both methods that resulted in the theme of building leadership capacity allowed principals to improve the capacity of leadership in school but also to manage their own well-being with one participant stating "....I don't have to go away carrying everybody else's worries and stresses; there is only so much that I can do once I've weighed up all the different options for myself.." Amanda referred to leadership coaching as "a very powerful skill that I've learned this year", with Fred recalling that coaching gave him the ability to "re-frame all problems in both his personal and professional life."

While the data collected in this research points to a very positive response to the research questions, there are still challenges that exist. Building a coaching culture in schools will still require further support, training and investment by the DES and the CSL. Coaching is still a relatively unknown approach to leadership in Irish education, but this research should support future policy development in the Irish context. The validation of leadership coaching psychology as a worthwhile leadership development process for school leaders has been advocated through this study, with practical advice around the challenges that will still exist in creating a culture of sustainable leadership coaching for the Irish education. Further Investment in leadership coaching may be one of the best long term investments for future school improvement for years to come.

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## **Appendix 1 Participant consent and ethical information**

### **Interview Procedure**

#### **Research Project Title:**

**Ph.D. Title:** *Educational leadership in a neo-liberal era: How leadership coaching psychology impacts principal leadership and well-being. A mixed methods study.*

**Interviewer name:** Paul Butler (Researcher)

**Interviewee name:**

**Location of Interview:**

**Time:**

**Date**

#### **Reminders to Researcher:**

Prior to the start of the interview:

Ensure that interviewee received the informed consent form and has returned the signed form to participate in the study either in person or by mail prior to participation in the study

Start Recorder

#### **Open with script:**

Hello participant. You have agreed to participate in my Ph. D dissertation study, which explores principals' experience of coaching psychology as support system and how it impacts on well-being.

Thank you for your willingness to participate. I would like to confirm that you have provided your consent for participating and recording this interview? Before we begin, I will summarise your rights as a study participant:

- I am asking you to respond to questions about your personal views or perceptions. This interview is not anticipated to last longer than 60 minutes. However, I might want to ask a few follow-up questions through a follow-up interview (via phone) if something is unclear during my analysis.
- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question or to withdrawal from this study at any time without repercussions; and
- Participation in this study will present little to no risk to you, but I recognize that you may feel discomfort in answering some questions. Your identity and the identity of your organization or place of employment will be kept confidential and will not be revealed in the results of this study.
- The content of this interview will be stored electronically on a cloud based storage system. It will be password protected. Once the interview is transcribed by myself it will be deleted from the storage device. It will be kept for 5 years post qualification in order to support any publication of the study.

Now that I have reviewed our rights, do you agree to participation the study?

Thank you again for your participation.

### **Background Questions**

To be eligible for this research the following questions need to be answered.

- Are you a principal/school leader?
- Have you undertaken a formal qualification in coaching psychology of at least Diploma QQI with level 6 accreditation component?

### Interview Questions

#### **Interview Questions:**

**Principal yes -----**

**Number of years experience -----**

**Qualifications-----**

**School type/size-----**

1) What do you believe are the 3 most important responsibilities of a school leader in 2018/9? What services do you avail of to support your role?

2) Why did you decide to undertake formal leadership coaching psychology training? Was cost an issue for you doing the course? From whom did you hear about course?

3) What skills/habits/benefits did you develop during the training if any? What coaching models do you use if any? What is your degree of competence to work as a coach now?

4) To what extent if any have your interactions with staff changed due to your participation in formal leadership coaching training? How?



4b) To what extent if any have your interactions with pupils changed due to your participation in formal leadership coaching training?

5) To what extent does your leadership role affects student achievement? How has this changed as a result of formal leadership coaching training?

6) To what extent if any has your approach to leadership changed because of your experience with leadership coaching?

7) To what extent if any and in what way has leadership coaching training impacted on your general sense of well-being as a leader?

What other supports/services do you access and how do they compare with coaching to enhance well-being?

8) What do you see as the challenges to leadership coaching ?

9) How many hours on average a week do you spend coaching staff?

10) To what extent if any has leadership coaching benefited you personally? How?

11) Do you see peer coaching as a way to improve leadership practice around the accountability/workload/neoliberal agenda of education? How?

How should coaching for principals develop in the future?

12) To what extent if any do you coach staff/pupils differently now?

13) Do you attend external coaching? Avail of CSL coaching service?

14) Do you see any difference between coaching and coaching psychology?

What do you see as the difference between coaching and mentoring?

What do you see are the main benefits of coaching?

What specifically about the coaching process is responsible for outcomes?

What do you see as the main problems of coaching?

Finally: Is there anything you see as being especially meaningful that you would like to say about formal leadership coaching and its impact on you in your role as a school leader?

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

##### **Consent to participate in the research**

**Ph.D Title:** *Educational Leadership in a neo-liberal era: How Coaching Psychology as a support system impacts principal well-being. A mixed methods study.*

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Paul Butler, a student on the Ph.D (Professional) Education at Lincoln University UK. This study will contribute to my dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you were identified as a principal teacher that has undertaken a level 6 QQI component formal training in leadership coaching.

##### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to research how coaching psychology as a support system impacts principal leadership and principal well-being.

### **PROCEDURES**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked some questions during an interview. The interview will take place in a venue that is convenient for you and should not take longer than 60 minutes.

A recording device will be used to capture the full duration of the interview. You may be asked to answer follow up questions by telephone for clarification or expansion on information shared during the initial interview (only if needed). The content of this interview will be stored electronically on a cloud based storage system. It will be password protected. Once the interview is transcribed by myself it will be deleted from the storage device. The transcript of the interview will be retained for 5 years in order to support any publication of the study.

### **Potential risks of harm to both project participants and researchers**

#### **1. Minimising Harm**

It is anticipated that there should be no risk associated with this project and you are free to not respond to any questions. Participants have a number of years teaching and experience as school principal. The researcher has no authority or formal assessment role with the participants.

#### **2. Respecting Autonomy**

Participation is voluntary. At any time during the project, participants will be able to exercise a right to withdraw and have their data removed and destroyed.

#### **3. Protecting Privacy/Confidentiality.**

There is a low risk study and the results will be anonymous. A recording device will be used with the permission of the participant and the information gathered will be stored in a cloud storage system in compliance with GDPR for a period of 5 years.

4. Offering reciprocity.

No payment will be made available to participants.

5. Treating people equitably. All primary school principals who have completed a diploma in leadership/executive coaching in Mayo Education Centre or in another centre will be invited to participate in the research. An option to interview principals who have received other coaching training may also be considered. No reference will be made to principals who do not take part in the study. All participants will be given a summary of research findings (on request).

This study has the potential to add to the body of literature when examining leadership coaching from the perspective of the principal.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Paul Butler, Primary researcher at 087 1276306 or by email:

[14564518@students.lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:14564518@students.lincoln.ac.uk)

**Signature of research participant**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I am over the age of 18 years and have been given a copy of this form.

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

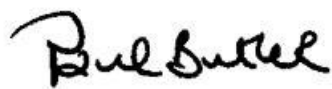
Signature of Participant

---

Date

**Signatory of researcher.**

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.



---

Signature of Researcher

---

Date

**Email to participants**

Dear -----,

I am a doctoral student (Ph.D Prof) in the University of Lincoln (UK) conducting a dissertation study which is focused on the impact of coaching psychology as a support system and the impact of coaching psychology on principal well-being. You were identified as someone fitting the criteria of being: a) an experienced school leader/principal and b) having studied a leadership coaching diploma at a minimum level 6 QQI component. I am contacting you to see if you would be willing to participate

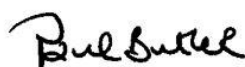
in an interview? The purpose of this study is to explore principals' perceptions on the impact of coaching psychology on leadership and its impact on principal well-being.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time during the process. If you agree to participate, the process will resemble the following: I will schedule an appointment and travel to your site, at your convenience. I will need to present the background and aims of the research and the elements of the informed consent form, have you sign the informed consent if you agree, and we will then proceed with the interview. The entire process will take no more than 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded and then later transcribed by myself. A copy will be made available to you (on request). It will be stored on a password protected cloud server and held for five years.

All data collected during this study will remain confidential and anonymous. Neither your name, nor the name of your school will ever be used in the study result. Ethics approval has been granted to carry out this study in July 2018 by the ethics committee of the University of Lincoln Education Department.

Please let me know if this request is agreeable to you. I am also pleased to answer any questions that you might have.

Thank you in advance for your  
consideration,



-----


Paul Butler

087 1276306






email:

14564518@students.lincoln.ac.uk

## Appendix 2 Advertisement to schools



Leading and Learning



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### New Resources


Left to their own devices:  
Trends in ICT at primary school level

June 2019 – National Council Meeting


Show more...

### Resource Bundles

Georgios Benet Bóthar  
Distributed Leadership – Deputy Principal



### Leadership+



## E-sceal 548 – External Research – Survey re the impact of a Diploma in Coaching on professional practice and wellbeing for school Principals

Published: 07 March 2019


*This survey is intended for Principals who have completed a diploma in coaching.*

Paul Butler, a principal who is seconded as director of Mayo Education Centre, is conducting Ph.D. research with the University of Lincoln on the impact of Coaching Psychology on professional practice. He is seeking Principals who have completed a Coaching Diploma to participate in a survey. Paul would greatly appreciate if Coaching Diploma graduates would complete the short online survey linked below, which takes approx. 15 minutes to complete, by **Friday 22 March 2019**.

[TAKE SURVEY >](#)

Responses are anonymous and all data will be saved in a password-protected

### Membership 2019/2020



Click Here

### IPPN Member Login

Hi Paul Butler,


[Log out](#)

### Search

Search...

[Go](#)

### IPPN Calendar



### Appendix 3 Qualifications summary

#### Other (please specify)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	29	60.4	60.4	60.4
B.Sc(Hon), Diploma in Educational Mentoring	1	2.1	2.1	62.5
BA - History and Sociology, MA - Adult Learning and Development	1	2.1	2.1	64.6
BA in Counselling	1	2.1	2.1	66.7
Certificate in coaching (2018) certificate in counselling 1994	1	2.1	2.1	68.8
Coaching mentoring training	1	2.1	2.1	70.8
Diploma in ICT	1	2.1	2.1	72.9
Diploma in Music	1	2.1	2.1	75.0
Diplomas in Counselling ,Interior design, Reflexology ,Art therapy.	1	2.1	2.1	77.1
Doctoral candidate	1	2.1	2.1	79.2



M Sc	1	2.1	2.1	81.3
M.A.	1	2.1	2.1	83.3
M.Sc. Occupational Psychology (Leicester Uni) following (PG Psychology (TCD)	1	2.1	2.1	85.4
MA	1	2.1	2.1	87.5
MA in economics and finance	1	2.1	2.1	89.6
Masters	1	2.1	2.1	91.7
Masters of Arts in Teaching and Learning, BSc General	1	2.1	2.1	93.8
Open University Masters	1	2.1	2.1	95.8
Postgraduate Cert in Restorative Practice & Mediation	1	2.1	2.1	97.9
Special Ed	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix 4 Other benefits of coaching

Other non-significant factors mentioned under the “other” benefits of coaching:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	3		6.3	6.3	6.3
Ability to get others to step up and take responsibility Manage self. Communication. Real listening	1		2.1	2.1	8.3
Ability to look at things in a positive light and move forward towards goals. Much more confident and ambitious. I now see things within reach which would otherwise have seemed well beyond the realms of possibility. Encouraging others and enabling them to develop a more positive mindset.	1		2.1	2.1	10.4
Ability to manage self and others	1		2.1	2.1	12.5
Allow you to develop others. Develop yourself. communicate better and clearer	1		2.1	2.1	14.6
allowing people time and space to reflect . it is successful as it is non directive and non-judgemental It really does release people's potential . I am sorry that I did not do the diploma years ago	1		2.1	2.1	16.7
Allows me to be a more reflective leader	1		2.1	2.1	18.8

As a result of the Coaching course I developed skills to help me identify and prioritise issues ,it also helped me identify what I could control ,what I had to accept and also what I could influence, within my working environment.	1	2.1	2.1	20.8
Better communication skills... active listening..	1	2.1	2.1	22.9
Better listening skills. Enabling more . Getting others to find their own solutions . Unlocking potential	1	2.1	2.1	25.0
Coaching enables staff to see issues from multi perspectives and assists them in finding their own solutions to problems and challenges.	1	2.1	2.1	27.1
Coaching has given me a certain amount of freedom to support others in making decisions for themselves rather than relying on me to come up with all the answers. I feel staff understand I do not need to micro manage and also appreciate the trust I have in them to try and even fail.	1	2.1	2.1	29.2
Coaching is a very beneficial Leadership Style. Allowing pauses to give others time to process, active listening and	1	2.1	2.1	31.3

asking good questions are skills which enhance effective leadership.				
Coaching is looking forward. Assessing where one is now and planning for the future using specific timely achievable goals	1	2.1	2.1	33.3
Collaborative planning, envisioning, pragmatism	1	2.1	2.1	35.4
Confidence, skills improvement, empathy, understanding of others, conflict management	1	2.1	2.1	37.5
Conversations had with staff and students are conducted in a more professional manner since I completed my coaching diploma.	1	2.1	2.1	39.6
Developing good relationships between co-workers , motivational and positive	1	2.1	2.1	41.7
Developing others; less micro managing; developing leadership capacity; freeing up my time to focus on other activities; "The job of the leader to create more leaders, not more followers".	1	2.1	2.1	43.8
Empowering my staff to be the best they can be. Supporting staff and children to	1	2.1	2.1	45.8

reach their potential. Building resilient staff.				
Enabling others Not providing solutions all the time	1	2.1	2.1	47.9
Enabling people to look at issues from a different perspective. Enabling people to reflect on the significance of what it is they are talking about - for themselves and for others Allowing people the space to express their concerns and then reflecting back to them what I have heard. In particular, I now try to reflect back to them what is being communicated to me through their non-verbal language. This is very powerful in empathising with people and as a lever to engage in deeper dialogue.	1	2.1	2.1	50.0
For me it followed naturally on my M.Sc. O/Psych. However, if one has common sense and a strong EQ, I believe undergoing the study/qualification is simply putting a framework on what one already knows. It does teach skills, approaches etc. and is very affirmative.	1	2.1	2.1	52.1
gives a structure for thinking about choices	1	2.1	2.1	54.2

Gives you a broader outlook on holistic education	1	2.1	2.1	56.3
Greater confidence in engaging with difficult conversations. In a school context coaching affords a way of dealing in a respectful manner with the problems that “do or will” happen in schools and life in general.	1	2.1	2.1	58.3
Helping others unlock their potential and my own. I haven't continued with coaching though.	1	2.1	2.1	60.4
Helps build and maintain relationships a key factor in effective leadership.	1	2.1	2.1	62.5
I think sometimes people just want to vent and if you listen you do that. Coaching empowers. love the idea that I was always trying to solve peoples problems now I try to get them to	1	2.1	2.1	64.6
Involves people in running of school. Makes others responsible for outcomes. Shared leadership	1	2.1	2.1	66.7
It can help boost confidence and help a person to rationally work out where they are going and how they are going to go about it to achieve it.	1	2.1	2.1	68.8

It enables individuals to improve their performance and enables them to achieve their targets and goals	1	2.1	2.1	70.8
It enables the individual find their own solution as opposed to you giving / suggesting a solution.	1	2.1	2.1	72.9
It gives a definite mind-set	1	2.1	2.1	75.0
It helps me help others solve their own issues so that they can become more adept at solving problems and become problem solvers and leaders in their own right. It also means that they can take the monkey back!	1	2.1	2.1	77.1
Listening skills, improve performance, make changes	1	2.1	2.1	79.2
Listening skills. Questioning skills. Knowledge of self and tolerance for others	1	2.1	2.1	81.3
Looking at problems from another point of view	1	2.1	2.1	83.3
Patience, Listening skills, Empathy, setting joint goals. Knowing not to give up on people. Catching people doing good and recognising it. Celebrating success	1	2.1	2.1	85.4

Personal development. Creating balancing in a very busy life	1	2.1	2.1	87.5
Self-awareness. Ability to set strategy for school with the help of a support person. Independent help	1	2.1	2.1	89.6
Skills to help develop capacity and potential in all of my colleagues and to lead the most effective team, which will lead to the most effective school we can have.	1	2.1	2.1	91.7
The main benefit of coaching is that it empowers people (Teachers and Pupils in the school context) to grow personally and to have a greater awareness of self. It helps them move into the future whilst also acknowledging the realities of the present.	1	2.1	2.1	93.8
The process of being coached allows the individual connect with their highest hopes for themselves, personally and professionally. It allows coachees to reflect on and to commit to achieving harmony between their values and their practice. In some circumstances it has led to individuals recreating their workspace so that they	1	2.1	2.1	95.8



are no longer, 'living contradictions' as stated by Whitehead.				
Through coaching I feel more confident working with others, be it staff or students. I use the skills and tools from coaching to guide my work especially one to one work. I also try to look at the positives in a person's life and move forward from that premise.	1	2.1	2.1	97.9
Very useful with our 4 children who are now in their late teens and young adults. We want to guide them without influencing them and coaching most definitely has helped me with this, the most important aspect of my life.	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

## **Appendix 5 Ethics approval**

EA2

Ethical Approval Form: Human Research Projects

Please word-process this form. Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

This form must be completed for each piece of research activity conducted by academics, graduate students and undergraduates. The completed form must be approved by the School of Education Research Ethics Committee. Please complete all sections. If a section is not applicable, write N/A.

### **1 Name of researcher**

Paul Butler

### **Department/School: Education**

### **2 Position in the University**

Doctoral Student Ph.D (Education).

### **3 Role in relation to this research**

Primary Investigator

### **4 Title of the research project**

*Educational Leadership in a neo-liberal era: How the Psychology of Leadership Coaching as a support system impacts principal leadership and well-being.* A Mixed Methods study.

### **5 Brief statement of your main research question**

Does coaching psychology impact on educational leadership and if so as a support system, how does it impact leader well-being?

## 6 **Brief description of the project**

*“Coaching is beneficial to increase resilience and confidence, cope with stressful situations, bounce back from obstacles and emotional detachment from a practical perspective” (Sadlar and Galdames, 57, 2018).*

### **BACKGROUND DESCRIPTION**

Since the 1990's there has been a major reform in educational leadership with the neoliberal agenda of performativity, business management and accountability having a major impact on the role of educational leaders (Ball, 2003; Machin, 2014; Stynes 2014). The sin of inefficiency (Sugrue, 2014) has resulted in an increased workload for school principals (Oplatka, 2017, 552) and this is having an impact on the functioning of schools (Horng et al., 2009). Principals' work is “characterised by long hours, numerous tasks, a frenzied pace, brevity and fragmentation” (Sebastian et al., 2017, p.6). The role has become “heavily administrative” (Sebastian et al., 2017, p.6) with performativity and accountability functions a requirement of that administration.

While according to Tucker and Coddling (2002), this new means of leadership is a very suitable approach for principals to adapt; indeed, it is argued that this culture of performativity is not just affecting schools, but is damaging principals' own health and well-being.

In 2015 the centre for school leadership (CSL) was set up by the Department of Education and Skills in Ireland and began to offer support systems to principals to cope with the demands of the role. One of these supports includes leadership coaching psychology. While some have availed of this support, others have chosen to obtain formal qualifications in the area, by participating in an Advanced Diploma in Leadership and Personal Coaching either through the Education Centre in Mayo or some private colleges.

According to the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) by engaging in coaching, school leaders will gain the following benefits:

- Increased ability to prioritise and manage demands

- Renewed enthusiasm for the job
- Enable the management of change more successfully
- Assist in creating a coaching culture in the school
- Provide time and space for reflection. CSL Ireland ([www.cslireland.ie](http://www.cslireland.ie))

There has been a considerable amount of interest in the field of coaching in recent years particularly around executive coaching (Page and De Haan, 2014). But does it really have any impact and if so how does it impact?

Grant et al., (2009) found that executive coaching significantly enhanced goal attainment, resilience and workplace well-being and reduced stress in certain areas of leadership. This success was also replicated when assessing coaching with high school teachers (Page and De Haan, 2014).

Other authors in the field have supported the view that executive coaching can be very effective and these include, Aguilar, (2013); Jones et al., (2014) and Theeboom et al., (2014).

According to Aguilar (2013), coaching is an essential part of an effective professional development programme where skills can be built, knowledge can be enhanced and capacity can be built, where no other professional development has gone before. These include intellect, behaviours, values and feelings of an educator.

So what about coaching in educational leadership?

School principals are critical to the leadership success of a school and in creating a culture of well-being (Bush, 2007; Day, 2007; Gorham and Finn-Stevenson, 2008) with their own health and well-being an important part of this success.

Principals experience loneliness, isolation and difficulty managing their time due to the neoliberal agenda and coaching psychology is emerging as a way to support head teachers (Sardar and Galdames, 2018). School leaders constantly feel the pull between efficiency

and effectiveness (Murphy, 2013) and the opportunity to offer coaching to school leaders is a key development in educational leadership support in Ireland.

**Outcomes and Potential Impact** This research will contribute new knowledge, as very little research has been carried out in the area of how leadership/executive coaching psychology is impacting on principalship and well-being in the Irish context, with respect to primary principals and particularly their well-being as a result of such support.

The aims and objectives of the research are to find out: Does coaching psychology impact on educational leadership and if so how does it impact principal well-being?

**The research aims:** To research the impact of coaching psychology as a support to school leaders. To identify how coaching psychology impacts on leaders well-being. To explore the availability of coaching training for leaders in education. What are the barriers to effective coaching psychology in schools? To provide data to support and influence future policy in the development of educational leadership support in the area of coaching psychology.

**Methodology:** This research will be framed in the pragmatic paradigm. The subjective experience of the individuals' experience is an important part of the research and particularly how the participants have experienced coaching psychology as a support system. This will result in a mixed methods research being undertaken through the collection of a survey and subsequent interviewing of participants and gathering information on their experiences. Meaning will emerge from the research with dialogue being an important part of the process. The differences between peoples' experience is important for the research and how meaning is constructed.

This research will be carried by surveying and interviewing principals who have obtained formal coaching training since 2015. A one to one interview with targeted questions will be recorded, transcribed and analysed for themes. Questions will be based on the role of leadership, how it has changed in recent years in light of the neoliberal agenda and how coaching psychology has impacted on this. It is proposed to interview 10-12 leaders who have completed a Diploma in Leadership Coaching in the past 3 years. These people have

been identified by the researcher and are open to taking part in the research. The survey will be distributed to all known principal/leader graduates of coaching working in education.

Framework. It is proposed to use Banduras (1978) model of reciprocal determinism as a framework for this research. The idea that peoples' behaviour is influenced by cognitive processes, the environment and social events. This triad of events impacts the way leaders perceive how their experiences unfold.

Questions will be devised on how coaching has impacted the principals' behaviours, interactions with others and how it is impacting on school performance. It will also have a focus on how coaching has impacted on their own well-being as a support system.

#### **Some References:**

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Page, N., and De Haan, E., (2014). *Does executive coaching work?* Regents university of London school of psychotherapy & psychology.

Sardar., H., and Galdames, S., (2018). *School leaders' resilience: does coaching help support head teachers and deputies*. Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice. Routledge:Chile.

Approximate start date: July 2018

Anticipated end date: Summer 2020

**7 Name and contact details of the principal Investigator** (if not you) or supervisor (if a student)

Email address: 14564518@students.lincoln.ac.uk

Telephone: 087 1276306

**8. Names of other researchers or student investigators involved**

n/a

**9 Location(s) at which this project is to be carried out**

This research will be carried out through Mayo Education Centre and its network of teachers/principals. As part of a network of 21 centres the research may obtain volunteer principals from other centres as appropriate.

**10 Statement of the ethical issues** involved and how they are to be addressed, including discussion of the potential risks of harm to both project participants and researchers

This should include:

- an assessment of the vulnerability of the participants and researchers
- the manner and extent to which the research might not honour principles of respect, beneficence and justice
- concerns relating to the relationships of power between the researcher(s) and those participating in or affected by the research

“It is certainly true that any research project involves many potential ethical issues. “  
Hammersley et al, 2012.

The ethical implications of this research will be explained and discussed in relation to the five ethical principles outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (Hammersley and Traianou (2012)).

1. Minimising Harm The potential risks to the participants, researcher, and schools involved has been assessed. These are very low. The safety of the researcher is not an issue in completing this work. All participants are over 18 years of age and have a number of years teaching and experience as school principal. They also have the capacity to consent to the research. There is no risk posed by covert observation, discussion of sensitive topics, invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures or third party involved. No financial incentives will be provided and no pain from likely participation. The often potential problem of unequal relationship between the researcher and participants is not an issue. The researcher has no authority or formal assessment role with the participants and the involvement will be totally voluntary. No children are involved in the research.

The primary investigator will be available to discuss any issues the participant may have during the research.

## 2. Respecting Autonomy

Participation is voluntary. Participants will volunteer to be interviewed. They can then freely decide whether or not they wish to participate. On completion of the research the results will be made available to the participants. At any time during the project, participants will be able to exercise a right to withdraw and have their data removed and destroyed.

## 3. Protecting Privacy.

There is a low risk study but the results will still be anonymous. The interviews will be taped/recorded and stored on a cloud computing password protected server. A recording device will be used with the permission of the participant and this information will be stored in a cloud storage system in compliance with GDPR. It will be password protected.



The interviews will be transcribed by the researcher so as to become familiar with the content and themes will be subsequently extracted by the researcher. The data will be stored in word format in a password protected cloud storage system that complies with GDPR rules of May 2018. The data will be deleted from the recording device once stored in the cloud server.

The data will remain confidential but the collated data will be published anonymously. It will be published with the doctoral thesis and made available to interested parties. The data will be held for a period of 5 years on successful completion of the doctorate research. This is to facilitate any publication work that may be carried out on completion of the doctorate.

#### 4. Offering reciprocity.

No payment will be made available to participants. The primary investigator will try to minimise the disruption to the participant's role by constructing the interview in a private setting that will respect the participant's position but yet capture the relevant information. It will involve answering orally questions from a pre-set list of research questions.

5. Treating people equitably. All Primary school principals who have completed a Diploma in Leadership/Executive coaching in Mayo education Centre, colleges, universities will be invited to participate in the research. An option to interview principals who have received other coaching training may also be considered. They are free to take part or exempt themselves.

The data will be analysed by the primary researcher and data collated to contribute to the original contribution to research. No reference will be made to principals who do not take part in the study.

Hammersley, M & Traianou, A. (2012) Ethics and Educational Research. British Educational Research Association. Online at <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Ethics-andEducational-Research.pdf>. Accessed July 1st 2018.

**11 Does this research involve children and/or young people?**

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please explain (a) how you have obtained or will obtain the appropriate permissions to work with these people (E.g., DBS check in the UK), and (b) your principles for their ethical engagement.

Ethical approval from other bodies

**12 Does this research require approval from an external body?**

Yes No X

If yes, please state which body:

**13 Has ethical approval already been obtained from that body? Please note that such approvals must be obtained before the project begins.**

Yes (Please append documentary evidence to this form.)

No (If no, please explain why below.)

APPLICANT SIGNATURE Paul Butler

I hereby request that the School of Education Research Ethics Committee review this application for the research as described above, and reply with a decision about its approval on ethical grounds.

I certify that I have read the University's Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Humans and Other Animals (which can be found online here:

<http://visit.lincoln.ac.uk/C11/C8/ResearchEthicsPolicy/Document%20Library/Research%20Ethics%20Policy.pdf>).

**June 29th 2018 Approval granted**

Applicant signature Date

FOR STUDENT APPLICATIONS ONLY Academic Support for Ethics

Academic support must be sought from your mentor prior to submitting this form to the School of Education Research Ethics Committee.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught applicants should obtain approval from their tutor or an academic member of staff nominated by the Department.

Postgraduate Research applicants should obtain approval from their Director of Studies.

I (the undersigned) support this application for ethical approval.

Academic / Director of Studies signature    Date

Print name

For completion by the Chair of the School of Education Research Ethics Committee

Please select ONE of A, B, C or D below.

X ☐ ☒ v

**A. The School of Education Research Committee gives ethical approval to this research.**

☐ B. The School of Education Research Committee gives conditional ethical approval to this research.

14 Please state the condition (including the date by which the condition must be satisfied, if applicable).

☐ C. The School of Education Research Committee cannot give ethical approval to this research but refers the application to the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee for higher level consideration.

15 Please state the reason.

☐ D. The School of Education Research Committee cannot give ethical approval to this research and recommends that the research should not proceed.

16 Please state the reason.

Signature of Chair of School of Education Research Committee (or nominee)

**24<sup>th</sup> July 2018 see below**

For completion by the Chair of the School of Education Research Ethics Committee

Please select ONE of A, B, C or D below.

☐ A. The School of Education Research Committee gives ethical approval to this research.

☒ B. The School of Education Research Committee gives *conditional* ethical approval to this research.

14 Please state the condition  
(including the date by which the  
condition must be satisfied, if  
applicable).

- Consent and information sheets required.

☐ C. The School of Education Research Committee cannot give ethical approval to this research but refers the application to the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee for higher level consideration.

15 Please state the reason.

☐ D. The School of Education Research Committee cannot give ethical approval to this research and recommends that the research should *not* proceed.

16 Please state the reason.

Signature of Chair of School of Education Research Committee (or nominee)



24<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Signed

Date

## Appendix 6 Copy of survey

Copy of survey



### Educational Leadership and the Psychology of Leadership Coaching

1. This survey is for Principals (Deputy/AP1/AP2) who completed a level 6 QQI Diploma in Coaching/training in Coaching .

**Research: Educational Leadership in a neo-liberal era: How the Psychology of Leadership Coaching as a support system impacts Principal Leadership and well-being.**

A former primary principal and seconded Director of Mayo Education Centre, Paul Butler is undertaking Ph.D (Professional) Education research with the University of Lincoln. Principals (DP/APS) of primary and post-primary schools who have undertaken a level 6 QQI component/ Diploma in Coaching/training in Coaching are invited to voice their opinions on the impact of their training on their practice. It is also planned to evaluate if principal well-being is improved as a result of coaching. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question or to withdraw from this study at any time without repercussions. The content of this interview will be stored electronically on a cloud-based storage system. It will be password protected. All data collected during this study will remain confidential and anonymous. Neither your name nor the name of your school will ever be used in the study result. The researcher can be contacted on email at [14564518@students.lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:14564518@students.lincoln.ac.uk) if you have any queries or need support to complete this survey. This survey will take approximately 15 mins to complete. Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is important.



## 2. Educational Leadership and Coaching

### Background

1. Your role

2. School Type

3. School Classification

4. Number of years as school principal

5. Qualifications-Tick all that apply

☐ B.Ed.

☐ Ph.D/Ed.D

☐ M.Ed.

☐ Primary Degree and Post Graduate Diploma in Education

☐ Postgraduate Diploma

☐ Diploma in Coaching

☐ MBA

☐ Other (please specify)

6. Your age

☐ Under 18

☐ 45-54

☒ 18-24

☐ 55-64

☒ 25-34

☐ 65+

☒ 35-44

7. Gender

M

F

#### Leadership and Management

7. Please indicate how important you would judge each of the following responsibilities of a school leader to be:

Moderately

	Very Important	Important	Important	Of little importance	Not Important
Leading Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing and Coaching Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Liaising with stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Motivating Pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. If you selected Other please comment here

#### Coaching Diploma Motivations

9. When considering why you decided to take a formal qualification in Coaching, what were your major reasons for doing so? Please select from the following reasons

Moderately



	Very Important	Important	Important	Mildly Important	Not important
Personal Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To develop my skills as a leader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promotional Prospects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Post-retirement planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

10. Did you receive funding for your fees from any source

Source (please specify)

11. Were course fees an obstacle for you in taking the course

- ☒ No I wanted to do the course regardless
 ☐ My fees were sponsored/paid for me
- ☐ Yes it was an issue but I proceeded regardless
 ☐ I got a discount due to previous study so was happy to proceed
- ☐ I got partial funding
- ☐ Other (please specify in the box below)

12. Where did you hear about the course?

- ☒ Email from provider
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Staff notice board
- ☐ Flyer
- ☐ Other (please specify in the box below)

Skill Development as a result of my Leadership Coaching Diploma

13. Please tick the appropriate boxes to indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about the impact of coaching skills on your effectiveness as a school Principal/Deputy/AP1/AP2.

My coaching skills have contributed to my effectiveness as a school principal/deputy/ap1/ap2 with staff?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly agree             | <input type="radio"/> Disagree          |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Agree           | <input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither agree nor disagree |   |

14. My coaching skills have contributed to my effectiveness as a school principal/deputy/ap1/ap2 with pupils?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Strongly agree  | <input type="radio"/> Disagree          |
| <input type="radio"/> Agree                      | <input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither agree nor disagree |   |

15. My coaching skills have contributed to student achievement?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Strongly agree  | <input type="radio"/> Disagree          |
| <input type="radio"/> Agree                      | <input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither agree nor disagree |   |

16. Please tick the appropriate box to indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about the impact of your coaching skills on your leadership skills.

My leadership skills have been developed as a result of my leadership coaching training?

- ☒ Strongly agree
 ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
 ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree

Please write in the box details of any other skills that you believe you have developed as a result of coaching training:

17. How many hours a week on average do you coach staff?

18. What other support systems have you utilised as principal/deputy/ap1/ap2?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee assist programme          | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership support groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching 1-1 for school principals | <input type="checkbox"/> IPPN                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> External counselling               | <input type="checkbox"/> Other support service     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PDST support                       |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)             |  |

#### COACHING IMPACT

19. Please write in the box below what you see as the main benefits of coaching if any?

20. Having graduated with a Coaching Diploma I now have the skills to be a competent Coach

21. Please indicate to what extent you agree that the following factors are the main challenges to creating a coaching culture at school:

Neither agree or

	Strongly agree	Agree	disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Time restraints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum overload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of awareness of the coaching process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of training on leadership coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff and ISM team unwilling to engage with coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

22. To what extent do you agree that peer coaching is a way to develop leadership skills?

☒ Strongly agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

23. Please write in the box below three examples of how coaching has benefited you personally if at all?

24. Have you yourself availed of 1-1 coaching with the centre for school leadership (CSL)?

25. Please write in the box below what you see as the difference between coaching and coaching psychology if any?

26. Coaching and mentoring are words for the same process.

☒ Strongly agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

27. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about how coaching should develop in the future for school principal/deputy/ap1/ap2?

Neither agree nor

	Strongly Agree	Agree	disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The role of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) is sufficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principals/DP/AP1/2 should be able to study a fully funded Diploma in Coaching Leadership with substitute cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No further action is required	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coaching should form part of the support system of PDST	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer coaching (Principal to Principal) should be supported by DES with extra administrative days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coaching (like the service within the Centre for School Leadership) should be compulsory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It should be mandatory for all Principals to have a formal qualification in Leadership Coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. The following issues can affect the successful delivery of coaching for school leaders. Please rank them 1-7 with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important.

⋮	<input type="text"/>	Time required to coach effectively
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Cost
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Staff resistance
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Competing agendas
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Workload
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Travel time
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Outside school time required

## COACHING AND WELL-BEING

29. Leadership coaching has improved my general sense of well-being?

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

30. Please indicate to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	or agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Coaching as a process supports Principal/Deputy/AP1/AP2 in managing the accountability/performance requirements of the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The workload of the role as principal/DP/AP1/2 has impacted my general sense of health and wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching has helped me with my overall job performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School principals should complete a Diploma in Coaching as part of their training when appointed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Principal/Deputy/AP1/AP2 should engage in coaching as part of their self development as a leader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to see principals peer coach (each other)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Principal/Deputy/AP1/AP2 should work with an external coach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching supports my general sense of health and wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The relationship between the coach and coachee is paramount for successful outcomes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching is an effective process for school leadership development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching is just another task I need to do on top of an already overburdened workload	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching makes me more accountable to the Department of Education & Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. Coaching has the following benefits

	Strongly Agree	Agree	disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Raises self awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has the ability to look at ones personal strengths and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has the ability to aid problem solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has the ability to gain insights on behaviours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has the ability to deal with heated issues constructively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gives one the confidence to coach others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helps reduce stress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:



	Strongly agree	Agree	disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The role of the principal is stressful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching helps to deal with the stresses of the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching Builds resilience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching supports teaching and learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching helps build the capacity of school ISM team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have no interest in engaging in coaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not everyone can be coached	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

33. Please rate the extent to which you value the following attributes/skills for coaches

	Suitable qualifications	Listening skills	Business Experience	educational leadership	Personal skills	A qualification in Psychology	Other
Extremely desirable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very desirable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat desirable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not so desirable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all desirable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

34. If you would be willing to be interviewed on your experience of undertaking a coaching diploma as a school principal/deputy/ap1/ap2 as a follow up to this survey, please enter your email address and/or phone number in the box below:

Email:

Phone Number:

35. Please use the box below if there is anything else you would like to add about your experience of completing a Diploma in coaching?

36. Please use the box below if there is anything you would like to add as you conclude the survey?

37. Would you like to receive a copy of the final report of this survey?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☒ Please enter your email here to receive a copy

## Appendix 7 Inferential statistics samples

### 3.16.1

	Coaching has the ability to aid problem solving				p- value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree		Agree		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	
Gender					0.023
Male (n=18)	(77.8)	14	(22.2)	4	
Female (n=26)	(100.0)	26	(0.0)	0	
Role					1
Administration/Other (n=30)	(90.0)	27	(10.0)	3	
Teaching (n=14)	(92.9)	13	(7.1)	1	
Age					0.284
25-44 years (n=11)	(90.9)	10	(9.1)	1	
45-54 years (n=17)	(82.4)	14	(17.6)	3	
55+ years (n=15)	(100.0)	15	(0.0)	0	
Number of years as a school principal					0.201
0-5 (n=7)	(85.7)	6	(14.3)	1	
5-10 (n=8)	(75.0)	6	(25.0)	2	
10-15 (n=12)	(91.7)	11	(8.3)	1	
15+ (n=14)	(100.0)	14	(0.0)	0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

	Coaching raises self-awareness						p-value <sup>1</sup>
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	
Gender							0.601
Male (n=17)	(82.4)	14	(11.8)	2	(5.9)	1	
Female (n=28)	(89.3)	25	(10.7)	3	(0.0)	0	
Role							0.522
Administration/Other (n=31)	(87.1)	27	(12.9)	4	(0.0)	0	
Teaching (n=14)	(85.7)	12	(7.1)	1	(7.1)	1	
Age							0.379
25-44 years (n=11)	(90.9)	10	(0.0)	0	(9.1)	1	
45-54 years (n=18)	(83.3)	15	(16.7)	3	(0.0)	0	
55+ years (n=15)	(86.7)	13	(13.3)	2	(0.0)	0	
Number of years as a school principal							0.278
0-5 (n=8)	(87.5)	7	(12.5)	1	(0.0)	0	
5-10 (n=9)	(77.8)	7	(11.1)	1	(11.1)	1	
10-15 (n=11)	(81.8)	9	(18.2)	2	(0.0)	0	
15+ (n=14)	(100.0)	14	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

### 3.16.3

Coaching has the ability to look at one's personal strengths and weaknesses

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		p-value <sup>1</sup>
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	
Gender							0.579
Male (n=18)	(83.3)	15	(11.1)	2	(5.6)	1	
Female (n=25)	(84.0)	21	(4.0)	1	(12.0)	3	
Role							0.469
Administration/Other (n=28)	(82.1)	23	(10.7)	3	(7.1)	2	
Teaching (n=15)	(86.7)	13	(0.0)	0	(13.3)	2	
Age							0.731

25-44 years (n=12)	(91.7)	11	(0.0)	0	(8.3)	1
45-54 years (n=16)	(87.5)	14	(6.3)	1	(6.3)	1
55+ years (n=14)	(71.4)	10	(14.3)	2	(14.3)	2
Number of years as a school principal						0.783
0-5 (n=7)	(71.4)	5	(14.3)	1	(14.3)	1
5-10 (n=7)	(85.7)	6	(0.0)	0	(14.3)	1
10-15 (n=11)	(90.9)	10	(9.1)	1	(0.0)	0
15+ (n=15)	(86.7)	13	(6.7)	1	(6.7)	1

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact

Test

### 3.16.4

Coaching has the ability to deal with heated issues constructively

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	p-value <sup>1</sup>
Gender							0.026
Male (n=18)	(61.1)	11	(33.3)	6	(5.6)	1	
Female (n=25)	(92.0)	23	(8.0)	2	(0.0)	0	
Role							0.136
Administration/Other (n=29)	(86.2)	25	(13.8)	4	(0.0)	0	
Teaching (n=14)	(64.3)	9	(28.6)	4	(7.1)	1	
Age							0.109
25-44 years (n=11)	(54.5)	6	(36.4)	4	(9.1)	1	
45-54 years (n=17)	(82.4)	14	(17.6)	3	(0.0)	0	

55+ years (n=14)	(92.9)	13	(7.1)	1	(0.0)	0	
Number of years as a school principal							0.119
0-5 (n=7)	(71.4)	5	(28.6)	2	(0.0)	0	
5-10 (n=8)	(50.0)	4	(37.5)	3	(12.5)	1	
10-15 (n=11)	(90.9)	10	(9.1)	1	(0.0)	0	
15+ (n=14)	(92.9)	13	(7.1)	1	(0.0)	0	
<sup>1</sup> from Fisher's Exact Test							

### 3.16.5

Coaching has the ability to gain  
insights on behaviours

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	p-value <sup>1</sup>
Gender							0.019
Male (n=18)	(55.6)	10	(38.9)	7	(5.6)	1	
Female (n=26)	(88.5)	23	(11.5)	3	(0.0)	0	
Role							0.309
Administration/Other (n=30)	(73.3)	22	(26.7)	8	(0.0)	0	
Teaching (n=14)	(78.6)	11	(14.3)	2	(7.1)	1	
Age							0.583
25-44 years (n=11)	(63.6)	7	(27.3)	3	(9.1)	1	

45-54 years (n=17)	(82.4)	14	(17.6)	3	(0.0)	0	
55+ years (n=15)	(73.3)	11	(26.7)	4	(0.0)	0	
Number of years as a school principal							0.552
0-5 (n=7)	(71.4)	5	(28.6)	2	(0.0)	0	
5-10 (n=9)	(55.6)	5	(33.3)	3	(11.1)	1	
10-15 (n=11)	(81.8)	9	(18.2)	2	(0.0)	0	
15+ (n=14)	(85.7)	12	(14.3)	2	(0.0)	0	
<sup>1</sup> from Fisher's Exact Test							

### 3.16.6

Coaching gives one the confidence to coach others							
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	p-value <sup>1</sup>
Gender							0.426
Male (n=18)	(50.0)	9	(44.4)	8	(5.6)	1	
Female (n=25)	(64.0)	16	(36.0)	9	(0.0)	0	
Role							0.171
Administration/Other (n=29)	(65.5)	19	(34.5)	10	(0.0)	0	
Teaching (n=14)	(42.9)	6	(50.0)	7	(7.1)	1	
Age							0.771
25-44 years (n=11)	(54.5)	6	(36.4)	4	(9.1)	1	
45-54 years (n=17)	(58.8)	10	(41.2)	7	(0.0)	0	
55+ years (n=14)	(57.1)	8	(42.9)	6	(0.0)	0	
Number of years as a school principal							0.647

0-5 (n=7)	(71.4)	5	(28.6)	2	(0.0)	0
5-10 (n=8)	(37.5)	3	(50.0)	4	(12.5)	1
10-15 (n=11)	(63.6)	7	(36.4)	4	(0.0)	0
15+ (n=14)	(64.3)	9	(35.7)	5	(0.0)	0

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's  
Exact Test

### 3.16.7

	Coaching helps reduce stress										
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)					p-value <sup>1</sup>
Gender											0.670
Male (n=18)	(33.3)	6	(50.0)	9	(11.1)	2	(0.0)	0	(5.6)	1	
Female (n=28)	(46.4)	13	(39.3)	11	(10.7)	3	(3.6)	1	(0.0)	0	
Role											0.075
Administration/Other (n=32)	(50.0)	16	(37.5)	12	(12.5)	4	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	0	
Teaching (n=14)	(21.4)	3	(57.1)	8	(7.1)	1	(7.1)	1	(7.1)	1	
Age											0.165
25-44 years (n=11)	(36.4)	4	(45.5)	5	(9.1)	1	(0.0)	0	(9.1)	1	
45-54 years (n=17)	(35.3)	6	(58.8)	10	(0.0)	0	(5.9)	1	(0.0)	0	
55+ years (n=17)	(47.1)	8	(29.4)	5	(23.5)	4	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	0	
Number of years as a school principal											0.577
0-5 (n=7)	(42.9)	3	(57.1)	4	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	0	
5-10 (n=9)	(22.2)	2	(44.4)	4	(22.2)	2	(0.0)	0	(11.1)	1	



10-15 (n=12)	(41.7)	5	(33.3)	4	(16.7)	2	(8.3)	1	(0.0)	0
15+ (n=15)	(60.0)	9	(33.3)	5	(6.7)	1	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	0

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

### 3.14

Leadership coaching has improved my general sense of well-being

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		p-value <sup>1</sup>
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	
Gender									0.046
Male (n=19)	(52.6)	10	(31.6)	6	(0.0)	0	(15.8)	3	
Female (n=29)	(48.3)	14	(34.5)	10	(17.2)	5	(0.0)	0	
Role									0.586
Administration/Other (n=33)	(48.5)	16	(36.4)	12	(12.1)	4	(3.0)	1	
Teaching (n=15)	(53.3)	8	(26.7)	4	(6.7)	1	(13.3)	2	
Age									0.491
25-44 years (n=12)	(33.3)	4	(41.7)	5	(8.3)	1	(16.7)	2	
45-54 years (n=18)	(61.1)	11	(27.8)	5	(5.6)	1	(5.6)	1	
55+ years (n=17)	(47.1)	8	(35.3)	6	(17.6)	3	(0.0)	0	

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's Exact Test

### 3.4

My leadership skills have been developed as a result of my leadership Coaching training							
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		p-value <sup>1</sup>
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	
Gender							0.824
Male (n=19)	(57.9)	11	(36.8)	7	(5.3)	1	
Female (n=28)	(53.6)	15	(32.1)	9	(14.3)	4	
Role							1
Administration/Other (n=32)	(56.3)	18	(34.4)	11	(9.4)	3	
Teaching (n=15)	(53.3)	8	(33.3)	5	(13.3)	2	
Age							0.315
25-44 years (n=12)	(33.3)	4	(58.3)	7	(8.3)	1	
45-54 years (n=18)	(55.6)	10	(33.3)	6	(11.1)	2	
55+ years (n=16)	(68.8)	11	(18.8)	3	(12.5)	2	
Number of years as a school principal							0.892
0-5 (n=8)	(50.0)	4	(37.5)	3	(12.5)	1	
5-10 (n=10)	(50.0)	5	(40.0)	4	(10.0)	1	
10-15 (n=11)	(54.5)	6	(36.4)	4	(9.1)	1	

15+ (n=15) (73.3) 11 (20.0) 3 (6.7) 1

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's  
Exact Test

3.9

Time restraints are a main challenge to creating a coaching culture at school					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Role					
Administration/Other (n=32)	✓ (3.1) 1	✓ (12.5) 4	✓ (6.3) 2	✓ (28.1) 9	✓ (50.0) 16
Teaching (n=14)	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (0.0) 0	✓ (21.4) 3	✓ (7.1) 1	✓ (71.4) 10
					p-value <sup>1</sup> 0.116

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

3.10

Have you yourself availed of 1-1 coaching with the centre for school leadership (CSL)?			
	Yes	No	No, but I plan to
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Gender			
Male (n=19)	✓ (36.8) 7	✓ (52.6) 10	✓ (10.5) 2
Female (n=29)	✓ (31.0) 9	✓ (51.7) 15	✓ (17.2) 5
			p-value <sup>1</sup> 0.850

<sup>1</sup>from Fisher's exact test

## **Appendix 8 Key words from transcripts**

Listening active

Questions questioning

Intuition

Awareness

Scaling

Fix

Ownership

Clarity

Focus

Impact

Value

Initiative

Leadership

Well-being

Empower

Reflective

Time

Training

Culture

Relationships

Teaching and learning

GROW

Culture